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Calvinist Contact

Christmas 1986

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**Yet to all who received Him,
to those who believed in His name,
He gave the right to become children of God.**

Calvinist Contact

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Welcome to this Christmas issue

This special Christmas issue has been sent to 170 churches throughout Canada, as well as to our regular subscribers. We hope that many will use the issue for personal, family, church and school enrichment. We pray it will bring adoration to Jesus the Christ child.

We at Calvinist Contact wish you all a blessed Christmas season. Don't be too busy that you can't come and adore Him. Take time to read some of the best that your writing brothers and sisters in the Lord bring you in this issue.

May the joy of the coming of the Christ child and the hope of the return of the victorious Christ man bring all you readers of goodwill, peace.

When the stranger comes to your door

A Christmas meditation on John 1:1-18

Jesus was an immigrant

When Jesus was born, He immigrated, so to speak. He left His Father's country to take up residence in ours. His Father gave Him a visa and a work permit. He also arranged for a young couple to help Him adjust to His new surroundings and teach Him the language and the customs.

The fact that Jesus was an immigrant was noticeable in His conduct and in the way He spoke. He had that strange heavenly way of looking at things. His philosophy was: my father's business is my business (a slight alteration of the "business is business" philosophy prevalent in His adopted country). He was not one of the boys. You know what the boys do ... to err is human.

The gospel of John talks of Him as a light in the darkness. That light is the ethnic baggage He took along as immigrant; the darkness describes our being of this earth. Modern-day sociologists would have a heyday trying to account for Jesus' lack of integration into His contemporary society.

The Pharisees had not studied sociology, but they knew right away that Jesus did not fit the rabbinical mode. They thought His behaviour strange, seeing that He was from Nazareth. On the other hand, being from Galilee is like being an immigrant to those in Jerusalem. It explains a lot ... but not everything.

Those who have been immigrants understand a little bit how strange Jesus must have felt. They have their own stories to tell.

Jesus was a drifter

The Jerusalem Bible in describing how Jesus was the Word and how the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, says that "He pitched His tent among us." So, Jesus was not only an immigrant but also a nomad — a tent dweller — a man of no fixed address, as police records would have it.

It seems that having been an immigrant does not altogether prepare someone for understanding the depth of the strangeness that Jesus must have felt. You would have to be a wino sleeping on city benches or a baglady scouring the streets to understand the predicament He was in. He was worse off than foxes and birds because He had nowhere to lay His head.

Jesus owned no property, no furniture, no utensils, no tools. Look around your house for a few minutes and make the comparison. The clothes he wore were all that could legally be termed: property of Jesus of Nazareth.

But this stripped-down existence of Jesus was not the fullest extent of His acquaintance with grief. What distinguished Him from other social outcasts and drifters is that He did not disappear from the family and neighbourhood to lose Himself in the anonymity of the big city. Not Jesus. He made Himself available to His society.

Apparently it's not enough to be a baglady or a wino to understand His social alienation.

Jesus was a black sheep

According to the gospel of John, Jesus came to the world He had helped make when He was with the Father, but the world did not recognize Him. He came to His own people, the ones He had helped become a separate people so that God could live among them, but His own did not receive Him.

That must have really hurt. It's a little bit like knocking on the door of your brother and having the door slammed in your face — "I don't recognize you, I don't have a clue who you are, you're not welcome here. Goodbye."

That's the kind of reception the gospel of John is talking about when it says, "His own did not receive Him."

I used to think that when evangelists asked you to receive Jesus, they meant that in the passive sense of getting a gift. Maybe that's what they did mean, I don't know. Some of them talk as if you get Jesus handed to you on a platter. "Receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

However, the Greek word for receiving, *paralambano,* rules out such passivity. It means, "bringing near," or "taking in." Thus when the gospel of John talks about receiving Jesus, it means you spring into action: you get up, go to the door and invite Him into the house of your life. "Behold He stands at the door and He knocks."

The stranger takes over

Let's suppose that you have sprung into action and have let Jesus in from the cold.

Jesus is now your guest.

And what a strange guest He turns out to be. (Remember, He's an immigrant!) He claims everything you are. Are you sorry you let Him in? Can you let go of everything you are? If what you possess is what you are, you have to let go of that too. Like the rich young ruler, you have to sell all and give to the poor.

Stranger things are yet to happen. The poor vagabond guest you allowed to come into your house brought a gift. How can He who has less on His person than a baglady, give you anything? The gift He brings is not a thing of this earth. (Remember His origin!) He gives you the power to become a child of God.

The strangeness about Jesus has now come full circle. Giving you the power to become a child of God means that He is changing your ethnic character, your citizenship from the city of man to the city of God. The light that has come to the darkness is changing you from darkness into light. In a sense, Jesus is turning you into a stranger so that you won't fit into the prevailing social patterns. But He is also making this earth a more hospitable place through you. And the immigrants, winos and bagladies will benefit from it.

Receive the stranger called Jesus into the house of your life this Christmas. Keep in mind too that He has a lot of brothers and sisters pitching their tents in your neighbourhood. He has given them His credentials. You may receive Him through them.

Bert Witvoet

The Christmas Angel

G. Roger Schoenhals

An angel of the Lord told **Zacharias** that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son. They were to name him John.

Six months later an angel spoke to **Mary** telling her that she also would bear a son. "You shall call His name Jesus," he said.

Later an angel appeared to **Joseph** saying, "Do not fear to take Mary for your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."

On the night Jesus was born, an angel came to a group of **shepherds** who were in a field watching their sheep. He told them they would find the baby in a manger.

Who was this angel? According to Luke, the angel who spoke to Zacharias and later to Joseph was Gabriel. It seems fair to assume that this was the same angel who spoke also to Mary and the shepherds.

Besides Michael, the archangel, Gabriel is the only angel to be named in the Bible. His name means, "Man of God," or "God's Hero."

In the Old Testament, Gabriel appeared twice to Daniel — once to interpret a vision and once to give him a prophecy. His only New Testament appearances pertain to the birth of Jesus.

Three common features

It is interesting to compare the four New Testament accounts involving Gabriel (Zacharias; Luke 1:11-20; Mary, Luke 1:26-38; Joseph, Matt. 1:20-21; shepherds, Luke 2:9-14). While different in many respects, they contain three common elements: good news, instruction and words of comfort.

First, not the good news:

To Zacharias he said, "You will have joy and gladness ... He [John] will turn many ... to the Lord their God." He will "make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

To Mary he said, "He [Jesus] will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His Kingdom there will be no end."

To Joseph he said, "He [Jesus] will save His people from their sins."

To the shepherds he said, "I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

Christmas is good news. It's a time for singing and laughing. A time for hilarious celebration. A time to shout from the mountaintops, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come!"

Instructions and comfort

The second common thread in the appearances of Gabriel was his instructions. He did more than announce; he enlisted action. He told Zacharias to name his son John. He told both Mary and Joseph to call the Christ-child Jesus. And to the shepherds he gave implicit instructions to "go and see for yourselves."

Christmas means celebration. But more, it means commitment to the will of God. Jesus came not only to save us, but to rule our lives. "And of His Kingdom there will be no end."

The third element which occurs in all appearances of Gabriel is the admonition of comfort.

Gabriel identified himself to Zacharias as one who stands "in the presence of God." He said, "I am sent to speak to you." Thus, we find in his words the very thoughts of God. This will help us appreciate even more the angel's words of exhortation.

Unlike the other words spoken by Gabriel, these admonitions were nearly identical:

To Zacharias he said, "Do not be afraid."

To Mary, "Do not be afraid."

To Joseph, "Do not fear."

To the shepherds, "Be not afraid."

Zacharias, Mary and the shepherds were afraid of their heavenly visitor. Joseph, on the other hand, feared the possibility of wedding a pregnant woman. But whatever the cause, the angel noted their fears and spoke to them words of consolation.

Christmas is a time for faith, no fear. There's so much evil in the world. So much to fret about. Another Chernobyl, old age, personal failure, economic ruin, physical violence — the list goes on and on. But Christmas reminds us that God has come near to us in Jesus Christ. "What room is there for troubled fear," wrote Amy Carmichael, "I know my Lord and He is near."

Beyond the tinsel and tinkle of Christmastime, Gabriel, the angel of Advent, speaks to us. He tells us to celebrate the good news of the Incarnation. He urges us to commit ourselves to the instructions of God. And he exhorts us to find consolation in the admonition, "Do not be afraid."

Roger Schoenhals lives in Seattle, Washington.

Illustrations

Cover

Front page illustration done by Paul Stoub. Paul was born in 1949 in Chicago. He received his B.A. degree from Calvin College in 1971. He worked seven years as an artist and art director for the Christian Reformed Board of Publications. Since 1979 he has been freelancing in illustrations and graphic design. Paul lives in Grand Rapids with his wife Fenna and three children.

Note on illustration: The woman pushing the supermarket buggy is the mother, herself a travelling person. The man who stops to look is a stranger. He is overcome by joy. She displays a quiet satisfaction as she treasures her child. The other people are in darkness, and the darkness knew Him not. They are too busy gathering for themselves. The radiancy comes from the buggy, showing that Christ lights up not only people, but also the creation.

Inside

Doug Roorda is a graphic artist, and freelance illustrator living in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Marguerite Witvoet is a student of art and music at Calvin College taking a year off from her studies. She lives in St. Catharines, Ontario.

CANADA

PRIME MINISTER · PREMIER MINISTRE

Mila and the children join me in wishing the readers and staff of Calvinist-Contact, a joyful holiday season.

The many festive celebrations and observances taking place across Canada mark a time of joy and peace.

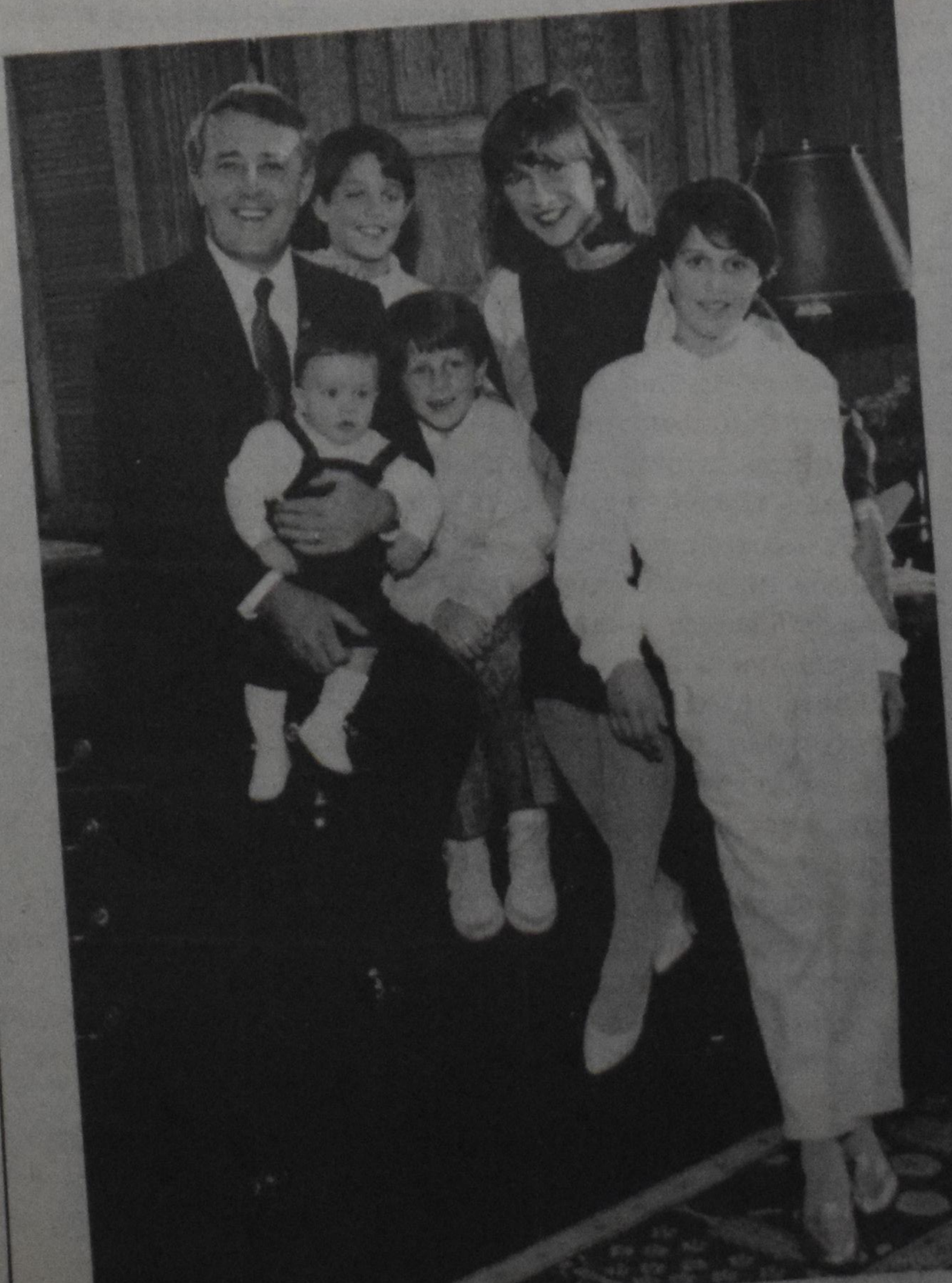
In declaring 1986 the International Year of Peace, the United Nations challenged each of us to work for peace as both individuals and as citizens of the world community. This season offers Canadians an opportunity to pause and reflect upon our good fortune as a nation free of war and civil conflict.

We are a nation of immigrants. For generations people from many lands have come to this country to find a new beginning -- to seek the peace and freedom they were denied elsewhere. In Canada they established a society which honours its multicultural heritage, a fact that is apparent as a variety of celebrations take place throughout this festive season.

May each of you share in the special spirit of this holiday season. And it is my hope that peace, health and happiness will follow you, your families, your friends and your community in the coming year.

Brian Mulroney

OTTAWA
1986



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*"Joy to the world!
The Lord is come."*

**The students and staff of Calvin College
wish you a blessed Holiday Season.**

There shoots a sprout out of the
stump of Jesse!
A new growth out of the old
roots, and it will bear fruit!
The Spirit of Yahweh shall rest
upon him:
the spirit of wisdom and insight,
the spirit of considered counsel
and restful strength,
a knowing spirit,
a spirit of fearing the Lord God
Yahweh shall settle down
upon him.
And he will be just glad to be
fearing the Lord Yahweh!
Isaiah 11:1-3
Translated by
Calvin Seerveld
Senior Member
in Aesthetics

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The board, staff and students
of the Institute for Christian Studies
pray that the Spirit of Yahweh rests upon you
during this advent season
as we celebrate the coming of Christ to us!

On behalf of ICS,

Dr. Clifford Pitt
President

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ICS

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And miles to go before she sleeps

J.A. MacDougall, MD

Finally, one day that December, I had to tell her. Medically, we were beaten. The decision lay with God. She took it quietly, lying there, wasting away, only 23, and the mother of a year-old child. Eleanor Munro (the name has been changed) was a devout and courageous woman. She had red hair and had probably been rather pretty, but it was hard to tell anymore, she was that near to death from tuberculosis. She knew it now, she accepted it and she asked just one thing.

''If I'm still alive on Christmas Eve,'' she said slowly, ''I would like your promise that I can go home for Christmas.''

It disturbed me. I knew she shouldn't go. The lower lobe of her right lung had a growing tubercular cavity in it, roughly one inch in diameter. She had what we doctors call open TB, and could spread the germs by coughing. But I made the promise and, frankly, I did so because I was sure she'd be dead before Christmas Eve. In the circumstances, it seemed little enough to do. And if I hadn't made it, I wouldn't be telling this story 37 years later.

Eleanor's husband had the disease when he returned to Nova Scotia from overseas service in the Second World War. It was a mild case and he didn't know he had it. Before it was detected and checked, they married. She caught the disease and had little immunity against it. It came on so fast and lodged in such a difficult place that it confounded every doctor who tried to help her.

She had been assessed at the leading chest hospital in the province and been turned down for pneumothorax, because of pleural adhesions; thoracoplasty, because of the location of the cavity; and pneumonectomy.

Eleanor Munro had weighed 125 pounds. She was down to 87 the first time I saw her. Her fever was high, fluctuating between 101 and 103 degrees. She was, and looked, very toxic. But she could still smile, I'll always remember. If you did her the slightest kindness, she'd smile.

Maybe that encouraged me. I don't know. But I did know then that I had to try to help her.

I first called Dr. I. Rabinovitch in Montreal, because he was a top expert on the use of the then-new drug streptomycin. Dr. Rabinovitch told me the drug wasn't available. When I described the case, he said he would advise against its use anyway. I then phoned a doctor in New York who was experimenting with a procedure called pneumoperitoneum.

This consists of injecting needles into the peritoneal cavity to force in air and push the diaphragm up against the lung. If we could get pressure against that lower lobe, we could hope to force the TB cavity shut. If we could do that, nature would have a chance to close and heal the cavity by letting the sides grow together.

At the hospital, we considered the risks and decided we had to face them. The operation took place the day after my phone call. We pumped air into the peritoneal cavity, but it nearly killed her. It was obvious that the amount of air she could tolerate could in no way help. Every doctor in the room agreed we shouldn't try a second time. We were licked.

It was then that I told her medical science had gone as far as it could go. I explained why in detail and she appreciated it. She listened with a quiet dignity and an amazing resignation. I told her that her creator now had the final verdict and that it would not necessarily be what either of us wanted, but would be the best for her in the circumstances. She nodded, and then exacted from me that promise.

Amazingly, she was still alive on Christmas Eve, but just barely. The cavity was still growing, her condition still worsening. She was so far gone that, as I recall, she had already had the last rites of the church. But she held me to my promise and, with renewed doubts, I kept it. I told her not to hold her child and to wear a surgical mask if she was talking to anyone but her husband. His own case had given him immunity.

She promised, and off she went by ambulance, wearing that smile I can't forget.

She came back to St. Martha's late Christmas Day, and she kept ebbing. No one could have watched her struggle without being deeply moved. Every day her condition grew just a bit worse, yet every day she clung to life. It went on, to our continued amazement, for weeks.

Toward the end of February she was down to or below 80 pounds. She couldn't eat — and new complications developed. She became nauseous, began to retch and vomit even without food in her stomach. I was stumped. I called in a senior medical consultant, and when he examined her he was stumped too. But with a grin, almost facetiously, he asked me if I thought she could be pregnant.

I can still remember exactly how I felt: the suggestion was utterly ridiculous. Everything I knew about medicine added up to one conclusion: she was so ill, so weak that she couldn't possibly have conceived. Her body just wasn't up to it.

Nevertheless, I did take a pregnancy test — and to my astonishment it was positive. On the very outer frontier of life itself, she now bore a second life within her. It was about as close to the impossible as you're ever likely to get, but it was true.

When I told her, she smiled and sort of blushed.

Legally, medically, we could have taken that child through abortion because it imperilled a life that was already in jeopardy. At that time, TB was the number one medical reason for doing so. But we didn't do it. The patient and her husband were against it. The doctors at St. Martha's were against it, not only on religious grounds, as Roman Catholics, but because we were certain the operation would kill her. Besides, she was so far gone we were sure her body would reject the child anyway.

So we fed her intravenously, and watched her fight to sustain two lives in a body in which only some remarkable strength of character or divine intervention had allowed her to sustain even one.

The struggle went on for weeks, and never once did we alter our conviction that she was dying. But she simply refused to die. And she kept her child.

And then an incredible thing happened. By late March, 1948, I was confounded to find her temperature beginning to go down. For the first time we noted some improvement in her condition, and the improvement continued. She began to eat, and to gain weight. A chest X-ray showed that the growth of the TB caviety had stopped. Not long after, another X-ray showed that the diaphragm was pushing up against the lower lobe of her diseased lung to make room for the child she bore. Nature was doing exactly what we'd failed to do with pneumoperitoneum: it was pressing the sides of that deadly hole together. The child was saving the mother!

The child did save her. By the time it was born, a normal, healthy baby, the TB cavity was closed. The mother was markedly better, so much better that we let her go home for good within a few months. Her smile had never been brighter.

I still remember with delight the Christmas cards she sent me for years. They were just ordinary cards, with the usual printed greetings and her name. But to me they were like monuments to a miracle of Christmas.

Dr. J.A. MacDougall is an anesthetist at the Saint John Regional Hospital in Saint John, N.B.

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The trumpet shall sound

Jacoba Bos

"Hey kid, can't you see where you're going?" Bobby jumped aside to let a rough-looking boy walk past him on the crowded city sidewalk. "What do you think this is — a Sunday school picnic?" The boy snickered as he elbowed his way through the crowd.

A steady drizzle was falling. Bobby felt the dampness creeping through his coat as he trudged along, his hands deep in his pockets. The growing darkness made the brightly-decorated store windows look warm and inviting. Christmas was only five days away, and Bobby was on his way to buy a present for his mother. The present for his dad was safely hidden under Bobby's pyjamas in the drawer. It was a picture of a lake surrounded by rocks and trees with clear blue skies overhead. Bobby had taken that picture with his Dad's camera when the two of them were fishing together.

"Do you think it'll be this nice in heaven, Dad?" he had asked.

His dad who was busy with fishing gear had pulled on his moustache and said in an unusual soft voice, "Even more beautiful than this, Bobby. This whole earth will be renewed and we shall all be changed ... look you've got a bite." Together they had reeled in the line. The big perch they caught became part of their fishfry around the campfire that evening.

"We should have that picture of the lake enlarged," Mom had said while going over the camping pictures. That gave Bobby an idea. He had the picture enlarged and framed. Some evenings when everything looked bleak he'd take the picture from the drawer and memories would come flooding back.

The stillness of the early morning, broken only by the laughter of the loon. The starry sky which looked like blue velvet studded with millions of glittering diamonds. And heaven will be even nicer? Bobby found that hard to believe but his Sunday school teacher had said the same thing so it must be true, he thought, as he trudged along on the wet street.

"Hey shortie, where you off to?" A gruff voice interrupted Bobby's thoughts. He looked up and saw Harold. Bobby hoped that Harold had to go somewhere really fast. He slowed his pace.

"Huh ... I'm not going anywhere. Just looking for some Christmas gifts," Bobby said, trying to sound grown up.

"Ha, Christmas presents. So what yer gonna get for your old man, long johns? Or are ya gonna buy him an axe so he can cut down his own Christmas tree. Then Bobby and Daddy can bring the tree home on the sled and find Mommy waiting with hot chocolate. Hah, hah." He laughed at his crudeness.

Bobby cringed. His hands formed fists in his pockets. He did not dare to start a fight with Harold who could pick him up with one hand.

Between clenched teeth he muttered, "I'll buy for my family, you buy for yours."

"Family, what's that? Heck, I haven't seen my old man since I was a little kid. He went on a trip, my mom claims. Some trip he's taking. Couldn't care less about what happens to his kid here." Harold swore and pulled a cigarette from a package in his pocket. He stopped, lit the cigarette and inhaled deeply. Bobby stopped also.

"So you can't even buy your dad a Christmas present?" Bobby's voice was almost a whisper. He looked up at Harold as he walked beside him, rubbing his coat sleeve across his face.

Smoke keeps getting in my eyes," he said in a husky voice. "So what are you buying for your dad?" It sounded almost friendly. Then Bobby told him about the picture in the drawer and the fish he caught. He told Harold about the rocks where trees grew, and the lake shimmering with lights from the setting sun. And shyly Bobby told Harold about heaven.

"So your dad figures there's a heaven somewhere; maybe that's where my old man went, on a one-way ticket." Harold was his brawny self again. They were getting closer to the shopping mall.

"Don't you have to go home? It's almost suppertime." Bobby said while dodging a big puddle. His feet were cold and wet.

"Naw ... my mom won't be home for another hour. There's nothing to do at home. I'll walk with you to the mall." The two boys trudged along in the foggy darkness. Warmth and light surrounded them when they stepped into the mall. Coloured balls hung from red velvet bows and a giant Christmas tree illuminated the surroundings with the soft glow of many coloured lights. Bobby found what he was looking for: the music shop. The boys stepped inside.

"Can I help you young man? Something in rock? Iron Maiden perhaps?" A gentleman with a pasted-on smile led them to shelves filled with records and tapes.

"I'd like to buy a record of Handel's Messiah," Bobby said.

"Handel's Messiah; who's he? A country and western guy?" Harold whispered. And, holding an imaginary guitar under his arm he followed Bobby and the salesman to the back of the store.

"This is the classical music section. Mr. Winter will be with you in a moment." With that the salesman returned to smiling at other customers.

"Bobby, how are you. What can I do for you?" Mr. Winter said as he recognized Bobby from Sunday school.

"I'd like to buy a record of Handel's Messiah." Bobby repeated his order.

"You mean the complete work, do you? That includes four records and costs $35," Mr. Winter said very slowly as if to help Bobby calculate the cost.

Bobby shifted uneasily in his wet boots. "But ... all I have is $20 Besides, I only need the part with the trumpet."

"The trumpet?" Mr. Winter raised his eyebrows.

"Hey, don't you know what a trumpet is, like tet-a-ratee." Harold cupped his hands over his mouth, and blew up his cheeks, imitating a trumpet player in action.

"I'm not sure I understand what you mean, Bobby. Have you ever heard a performance of the Messiah?"

"Yes ... I did," Bobby said haltingly.

"Gee, did you go to the grand ol' opera?" Harold's eyes grew big with excitement.

Bobby shook his head. "I went with my mom to hear the Messiah and I liked the part with the trumpet best of all. My mom said that's how it'll be when ... when Christ returns. Then there will be the new heaven and the new earth and my dad says that we shall all be changed." Mr. Winter had listened intently.

"Would you like to hear that part now? Do you have a few minutes?" Quickly Mr. Winter made the necessary arrangements and the clear music of the trumpet filled the shop. "Beautiful, isn't it," Mr. Winter beamed, "And to think that the new heaven will be filled with harmonious melody."

"You think there'll be guitars there?" Harold asked, wide-eyed.

"Yes, guitars too," Mr. Winter replied with a twinkle in his eyes, "But what about the records, Bobby; were you going to buy them for a gift?"

"Yes, for my mom," Bobby said. "But I don't have enough money," he added dejectedly.

"Just a moment." Mr. Winter went to the front of the store for a hushed conversation with the smiling salesman.

"Don't let him sell you the record without trumpets," Harold hissed in Bobby's ear. "I don't trust that guy up front there with his Santa Claus smile." Mr. Winter returned, grinning broadly.

"Good news, Bobby, it looks like you'll get the trumpet piece and the other records. The complete Messiah.

My boss, Mr. Jones over there is willing to sell it to you for $20 and I will cover the sales tax for you.'' His smile went from ear to ear.

''That's great Mr. Winter, thank you very, very much,'' Bobby stammered as he pulled the crumpled 20-dollar bill from his pocket and handed it to Mr. Winter, who wrapped up the records carefully.

''There you go, young man, and a very merry Christmas to you and your ... friend?'' He looked in the direction of Harold who was admiring a guitar, gently stroking its glossy finish.

''Yes,'' Bobby said firmly. ''He's my friend. I'm going to invite him to our house so he can hear the trumpet and see the picture.'' He stopped abruptly when Harold joined him.

''We've got to go, kiddo, my mom's home now.'' Together they started on their way home. The thick fog surrounded them like a wet blanket, numbing Bobby's feet. ''Gee, I hope your mom knows how to work a record player. If she needs help just ask me, I can fix anything except the crack of dawn,'' Harold bragged. ''She's got to hear the trumpet you know.'' Soon the boys came to the street where Harold lived.

''Well, I guess I'll be seeing ya sometime, huh?'' Harold said, sounding like he was sorry to leave Bobby.

''D'ya wanna come to my house to listen to the trumpet and see the picture?'' Bobby asked. ''I'm sure my mom won't mind. Why don't you come on Christmas Eve.''

''It's a deal.'' Harold's big hand landed on Bobby's shoulder. Bobby heard him whistling as he disappeared in the dark street.

Bobby hurried home carrying the precious gift. Cars zoomed by and were soon swallowed up in the dense fog. He trudged along, thinking of the blue sky and the sparkling water of the picture ... almost like heaven ... almost like heaven. His footsteps seemed to say it. He wondered what his mom would say when she heard the trumpet. Would she cry like she did when she heard the music in the concert hall?

''Sometimes people cry because they're happy,'' Mom had said. The parcel Bobby was carrying seemed to get heavier with every step he took, but his heart was light.

The trumpet shall sound. He tried to hum the tune but could only remember the words. He stepped along to the rhythm, forgetting the fog and his cold toes, the trumpet shall sound ...

Jacoba Bos is a writer of short stories. She lives in Strathroy, Ontario.

Illustrations by Marguerite Witvoet of St. Catharines.

Anna

Luke 2:36-38

Stooped down by the years of the very strong
Anna, widowed mother of Israel
Sends her prayers up through the temple arches
To the God of her redemption
Giving thanks to Him.

Soon the carpenter and his wife
Enter upon Anna's private chapel
With God's redemption in their arms
Their hearts in tune with Anna's
Giving thanks to God.

Anna scales redemption's pulpit
Reaching out to all who hear
''Salvation's hour has now arrived,''
And angels' voices blend with ours
Giving thanks for Jesus.

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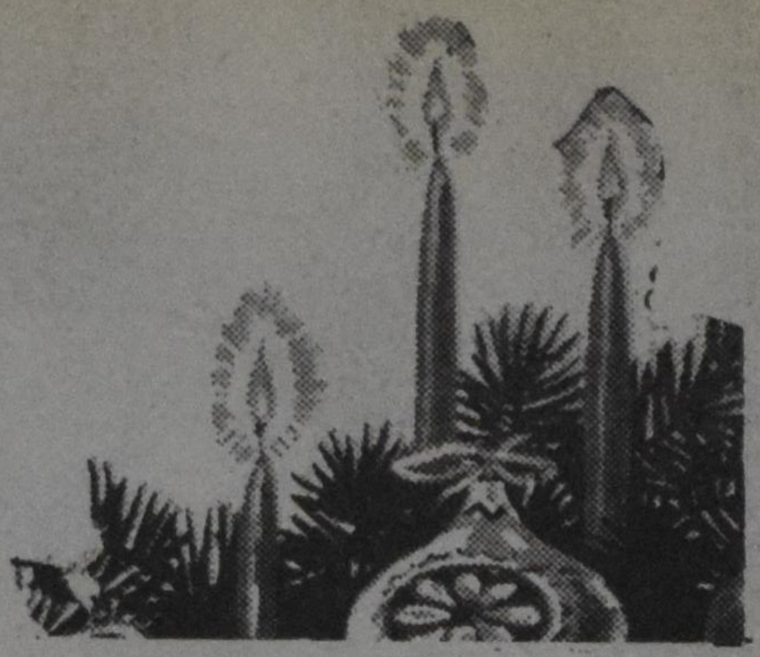

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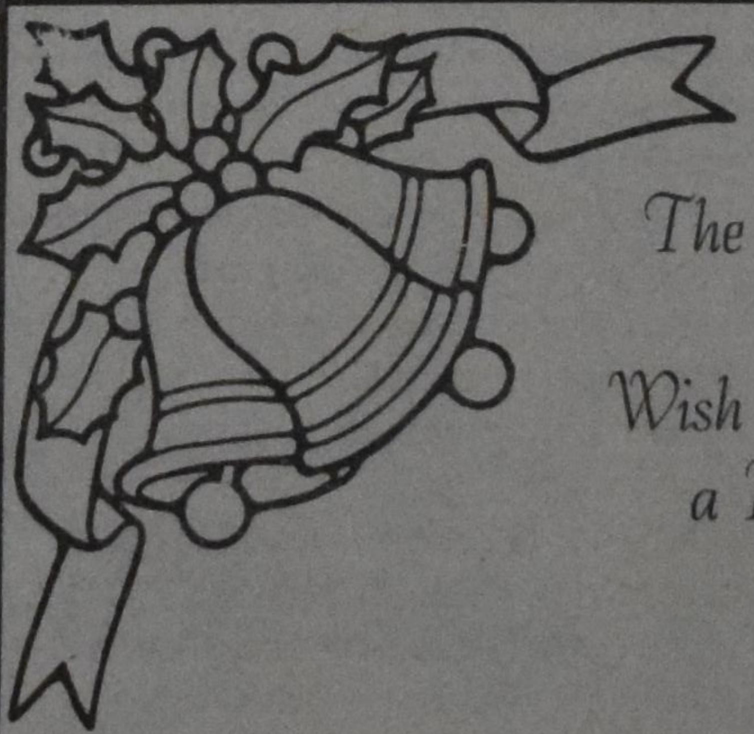

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The last shawl

Evelyn Witter

Nathan went to the marketplace with his father. It pleased him to be asked to assist in the day's business, for more than anything else in the world, Nathan wanted to be a successful merchant like his father.

Around the well at the end of the crooked street there was the noise of animals; donkeys brayed, sheep bleated, camels made their queer noises. Intermingled with the animal noises were the voices of the merchants and camel drivers from far-off lands.

His father, though shorter than he, guided him through the crowds much as he had when he was a little boy, to an advantageous spot in the marketplace. As they unfolded the shawls which his father hoped to sell this day, he said, "Watch me carefully today, my son. These are important goods and should bring us a good profit. Watch how I bargain and use sound judgment as to the highest price I can obtain from each customer."

"Yes, Father," replied Nathan, and sat obediently on the ground next to his father. As he looked around, he thought his father's display was the prettiest, prettier even than the hammered trays of copper, or the shining silver fish. The shawls were brilliant, like the flowers of the field ... red and yellow and green. They were finely woven too, Nathan thought with pride. They had come from across the sea where shawl making was an art.

His father had made an excellent choice of goods. The shawls were sure to catch the eyes of all who loved the feel and look of grandeur. That is, all the shawls but one would attract. The plain shawl, its soft colour like the blue of the sky on a mild day, looked too modest next to the blazing beauties, Nathan calculated.

Then everywhere he heard people shouting, "A caravan! A caravan is coming!"

It was a large caravan. Nathan saw his father rub his plump hands together and wet his lips in anticipation of the business it would bring. Nathan hoped secretly that his father would give him a chance to bargain, to show his good judgment in business, and thereby ask him to be a partner merchant.

Nathan grabbed a red shawl, interwoven with gold and shouted, "Come buy! Come buy!" One of the drivers called to his camel in a strange language. The camel kneeled down, and the man reached for a brown bundle from its back. He opened the bundle and Nathan gave a cry of wonder. Here were spices and perfume! Nathan spread the shawl proudly. The man's admiration told Nathan he wanted the shawl very much, and Nathan felt a stimulating sense of conquest. The man offered the perfume. Nathan shook his head and pointed to the spices.

Finally Nathan returned to his father with both the spices and the perfume.

"Very good judgment, son!" his father exclaimed, patting his back in approval.

Nathan was proud and happy. His heart sang as he assisted his father in spreading shawl after shawl, for buyer after buyer, listening and watching each transaction. His father always asked more from foreigners than from his own people. His father was a very wise man.

The day's business was coming to a close. All the shawls were gone, except one: the pale blue one of the coarser weave that Nathan had calculated at the outset would not sell.

"We have had a profitable morning," his father announced. "I shall go to the potter and find the finest water jug in his collection and take it to your mother. Stay here, son. Sell the last shawl. If your judgment is good on this sale, which I warrant shall not be easy since the shawl is not on the attractive side, then and only then shall I consider you ready for business."

"Yes, Father," replied Nathan. It was exciting to be selling. It was an intoxication which penetrated deep into a person, and diffused itself to every living tissue. Nathan felt it strongly. He prayed that he could prove to his father that not only did he enjoy the work but that his judgment was sound.

The crowd in the marketplace was thinning when Nathan saw a man with tattered sandals stop before him. His eyes sparkled and his lips smiled as he stopped to touch the shawl at Nathan's feet.

"What is the price of the shawl?" the man asked.

"Its price is too much for you, I am afraid," said Nathan honestly. "You are a tradesman here in Nazareth, are you not?"

"Yes," replied the man. "I am a carpenter."

"Of course!" Nathan exclaimed, "I know you. You are Joseph."

The eyes of the poor carpenter were still on the shawl as he said, "I would like the shawl for my wife. We are soon to go on a journey to the city of David where we must register."

"Ah yes," sighed Nathan sympathetically. "Our people are gravely oppressed by the decrees of the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus. This new registration means more taxes."

"Do not speak ill of the emperor if you would keep your head," said Joseph in a hushed whisper. "But the shawl ..." The carpenter extended his hand in which lay two small coins.

Nathan looked at the two coins. Hardly enough to cover the cost of the shawl. There was no profit here. What should he do, he wondered? How was he to judge whether or not he should sell the last shawl for so slight a price? His father, he remembered, always asked less from his own people than he did from foreigners. The carpenter was one of his own people, one of his own neighbours. And just yesterday Rabbi Ezra had read from the scrolls: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This neighbour was a good man, a gentle man, a kind man ... a man easy to love. His wife needed the shawl for a tedious journey out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David which was called Bethlehem.

"You may have the shawl," Nathan then told the carpenter.

Joseph extended his arm as Nathan draped the shawl over it. He stroked it caressingly, and refolded it carefully over the worn sleeve of his tunic, and quickly hurried away with a happy smile playing about his lips.

Nathan waited nervously for his father to return. Would he be angry about the poor price for the last shawl, or would he understand Nathan's judgment? At long last, when the sun was making the sky red, his father returned.

"Ah, Nathan," his father greeted him. "I see the last shawl is gone! And what price did you obtain?"

Nathan said nothing. He held out his hand and opened the palm in which lay two small coins.

"You sold the shawl for this!" his father shouted and anger rose so vehemently in his breast he could scarcely breathe.

"Yes, to Joseph, the carpenter."

"What difference the trade? Be it Mark the potter or Joel the farmer ... we

Continued on page 11...

Illustrations by Doug Roorda of St. Catharines.

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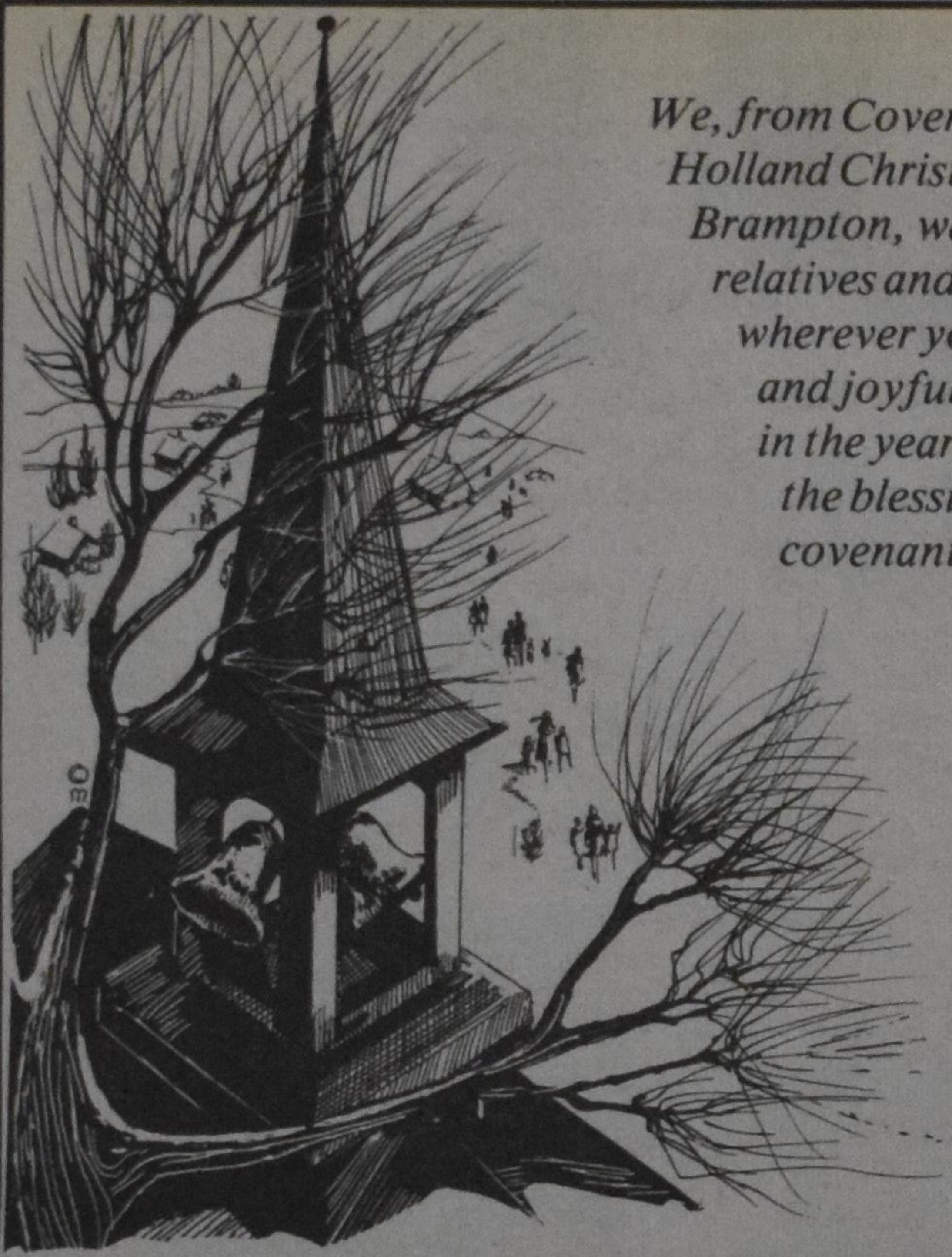

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The last shawl

...continued from page 9.

must make a profit on our goods. Go, boy. Go to the carpenter shop immediately and redeem the shawl. Tell Joseph your father cannot approve such a bargain, and give him back his coins. A man of my position cannot humble himself in such a manner, but a youth can easily resort to such a recourse. Go! At once!''

''Yes, Father!'' murmured Nathan. But his heart was sad. His father would not trust him again. He might never be a merchant. Then indeed would his life be as useless as the clay without the potter. Perhaps, though, if he would get the shawl back, his father would relent and give him another chance.

Nathan sauntered down the crooked street and called back only half-heartedly to the children who looked up from their marble games to hail him.

When he came to the carpenter shop he stopped. What could he say to this kindly man without injuring his feelings?

Then he saw a woman, heavy with child, moving about. As he stood there, he heard her singing softly. She drew the blue shawl about her shoulders and head. As it framed her sweet face, Nathan thought how well it became her.

Then she paused briefly before her husband, saying, ''Joseph, Joseph, it is a lovely shawl. It will give me ease on our long journey.''

Nathan knew then that he could never redeem the shawl. He felt in his soul that it was right that it should belong to this woman. Then he turned and sauntered back up the street.

''Father,'' he said when he returned to the marketplace, ''I cannot take the shawl back. It is needed by one who is sorely tried in these troubled times.''

''Bah!'' shouted his father. ''You are not a merchant. You are ... you are nothing more than a dreamer like the shepherds of the hills. On the morrow I shall take you to a shepherd and beg him to accept you for hire.''

''No! No! Please, Father! I do not wish to be a shepherd,'' Nathan cried. But he knew all was lost. His pleading would be of no avail.

The next morning his father took him to the black tent of Tobiah, the shepherd. ''Do you think you can make a shepherd of this boy?'' his father asked Tobiah.

''But I thought he was to be a merchant,'' the shepherd raised his eyebrow in surprise.

''He has no judgment,'' his father said. Nathan hung his head.

The shepherd put his strong hands on Nathan's shoulders and forced him to look up. ''A good shepherd must have sharp eyes and quick hands. He must not let the lambs wander away among the rocks. He must keep the sheep from getting too much water into their wool and drowning in the pools among the rocks. He must watch for wild animals. Do you think you can do all that, Nathan?''

Nathan tried to keep the tears from spilling down his cheeks. He did not want to be a guardian of sheep? It was a sad day indeed. But he took his crook, his sheep's skins of sour milk and flat bread, and joined the other boys who were herding the sheep up in the hills. Without a backward glance at his father, he left.

The days went by. Nathan did his job as he was told, but he did not like his tasks. His mind was never completely on the sheep, it was in the marketplace. He dreamed of the sounds, the smells, the excitement, the strange caravans from faraway places, and his heart was mightily disturbed. He hungered, too, for a sight of his father. Forlorn as he was, he never once was sorry about the last shawl.

One evening, as the sun was sinking quickly and the flock was being driven safely home, Nathan sensed an air of excitement as he drew close to the black tent of Tobiah.

He recognized the full form of his father. ''Father!'' he cried, running down the rocky path to the outstretched arms waiting for him.

''Nathan! My dear son!'' his father answered, holding him close.

Tobiah spoke up, ''A most wondrous thing has happened, Nathan. Your father brings word that the Prince of Peace was born in Bethlehem. Shepherds have seen him held in the arms of his mother, Mary, who cradled Him against her blue shawl.''

''The last shawl ... my judgment was all right then, Father?''

''Your judgment was truly inspired!'' replied his father sincerely.

''I feel very humble when I think of the good judgment you showed, Nathan, selling the last shawl to Joseph the carpenter.''

''Do not feel humble toward me, Father,'' replied Nathan. I could not have known about the Prince of Peace.

''That's right,'' said Tobiah. ''But let us all rejoice that the last shawl is giving some small measure of comfort to the one who will bring great comfort to the whole world!''

Evelyn Witter is a writer of fiction. She lives in Milan, Illinois.

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and a

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Jonathan's Christmas

Illustrations by Marguerite Witvoet of St. Catharines.

Mary Steenland

It was Christmas morning. Restless to be out and about in the new-fallen snow, Jonathan tugged on his boots and his jacket and out he went into the backyard with his dog Rufus. "C'mon, Rufus!" he called, flying over the blanket of snow. The light fluffy snow flew in all directions as Jonathan and Rufus rough-and-tumbled about!

"Look at this," called Jonathan. "I'm going to make a snow angel!" He flopped himself down on his back and waved his arms and legs side-to-side to make an angel. As he lay in the snow, Jonathan rested momentarily, muffled in white, and gazed far into the clear sky. He listened to the quiet all around him, the lovely stillness of the new-born day.

Suddenly out of the sky above him, Jonathan thought he saw a dove, as pure and white as the snow, drifting and soaring, gliding toward him. Jonathan was astonished! He knew all the birds of the woods across the road and the marsh nearby. There were robins, chirping sparrows and orioles. He had a special love for the finches and the darting swallows. But this was surely strange ... a dove mid-winter in his own backyard?! Jonathan sat up in wonder and curiosity. As the dove approached him, there was a momentary gleam of light and before Jonathan stood a creature such as he had never seen before. The dove had been instantly transformed into a tall white-winged creature. His eyes were both piercing and kindly. They flashed and sparkled with the blue of sea and sky. He wore a cloak of deep purple and a red silk band about his head.

"Who are you?" asked Jonathan.

The angelic creature spoke with kindliness and concern. "I am a messenger. My name is Mendel. Rise up, Jonathan."

Somehow, Jonathan had a feeling that he knew this messenger. There was something familiar and comforting about him.

"Come with me, Jonathan," said Mendel.

Jonathan thought about all the Christmas activities awaiting him that day and he hesitated.

"Don't worry," said Mendel, "you will be home in time for Christmas." Mendel held out his hand to Jonathan and the boy placed his small hand in the hand of the angel. Mendel drew Jonathan to his side and covered him about with his soft strong wing.

"But where are we going?" asked Jonathan.

"Be still now, child," answered Mendel. "You are safe. Trust me. I am holding you and will not let you fall."

As Jonathan was held enwrapped in the angel's wing, he felt the power of an immense and roaring wind that seemed to encircle both Mendel and himself. There was a rumbling, roaring sound, followed by a sharp clap of thunder that startled Jonathan so that he clung tightly to Mendel; but Mendel held the boy and his strength and gentleness quieted him.

When Mendel spread open his wings, Jonathan stood in wonder to see him raise his wings in a complete circle over his head and gaze out in sadness over the land before him. Together they stood in a land of desolation, cold and gray.

"Where are we?" asked Jonathan. "I don't understand."

"My son," answered Mendel, with compassion in his voice, "we are standing in the realm of Calandra."

"But this is really a very strange place," said Jonathan. "It doesn't feel right. I wish Rufus were here."

"Look upon this land," said Mendel. "It was created a very long time ago, the apple of the creator's eye. Oh, the creator loved this realm. It was a multi-coloured land full of life and joy. The creatures of this kingdom once breathed crystal clear air, brisk by night and warmed by its red suns by day. The fish and sea-creatures plunged and swam against the bubbling waters of its springs and pools, its rivers and deep oceans. And all the creatures of the woodlands and the mountains lived in peace with one another. The rainbow rising above us was a special gift to remind us of the love among all living creatures. A spell has been cast on the kingdom of Calandra. A darkness has come over this land. The birds and the land animals have found the air heavy and strange, so that they cannot breathe freely as they once did. The water creatures find the waters have also changed. The earth grows strange plants with a bitter taste and the branches of trees no longer grow sweet fruit. The colours have drained from our rainbow. Our land is fading and growing ever colder. It grows still with a fearful silence. It is not the comfortable silence that friends share when they speak without words, but the silence that separates all living creatures and leaves each one utterly alone."

"But why have you brought me here?" asked Jonathan.

"I have brought you, child, because you are our last and final hope. I have been sent by the creator of Calandra and by its prince to bring you here so that you may break the dark spell that binds this land. I have brought you here to break the silence and warm the cold, to fill our rainbow once more with colour and our creatures with life."

"But I am only one small boy," answered Jonathan.

"How can I possibly break an evil spell and bring an entire kingdom back to life? Really, I don't mean to be disrespectful, but I think you have the wrong boy."

"You have the power within you, Jonathan. Come, let me bring you before the prince." Mendel laid his hand on Jonathan's shoulder and walked with him into a nearby wood. There within a corner of the wood, Jonathan found a gathering of woodland creatures encircled about a small bird. The bird looked very much like the birds in his own backyard. A small golden crown lay beside him in the curled gray leaves.

"My lord, Prince Aidan," said Mendel, "I have brought with me the Christmas child, as you requested." The prince was silent.

Jonathan could not hide his astonishment. "This is the prince?!" he whispered to Mendel.

"Yes, my child. The prince grows ever weaker. He will soon die, and with him the entire kingdom. If however, a child will share his Christmas with the prince, he will be restored and all of Calandra with him. You are the Christmas child, Jonathan. You must try."

"Share my Christmas?" asked Jonathan. "But I don't have my Christmas here with me. It's in my own world, in my own home. And that reminds me, I really have to go home now."

At that, Prince Aidan's feathers faded and he turned his head slightly, so that his dark eyes met Jonathan's.

"Well," said Jonathan, "just let me think a minute." Jonathan paced about and thought hard. "All right," he said, "I think I can do it; but you, Mendel, will have to use your powers to help me. I will bring the realm of Calandra back to life, and then I will go home for Christmas."

"Agreed," said Mendel.

"What we need," said Jonathan, "is a Christmas tree, lots of presents and a magnificent Christmas dinner! Do you think you can get these for me, Mendel? You will have to go back to my world and get them ... and don't forget the presents! We will have Christmas right here in Calandra."

"I will do as you command," replied Mendel. Mendel wrapped his wings about himself and, in an instant, he was gone.

Jonathan stood alone in the woods, looking about him. It looked so like his own little woodland across the road. He sat on the ground and looked curiously at the bird-prince. As the bird faded still more, Mendel suddenly appeared with all that Jonathan had requested.

Jonathan's eyes lit up! "Oh, Mendel, that's terrific! You brought everything we need for Christmas. It's all here now: gifts and dinner, treats and lights!"

Continued on page 15...

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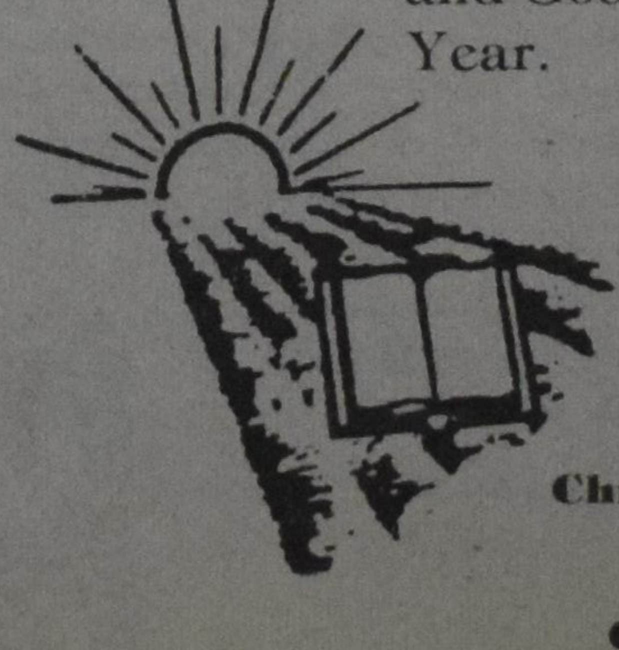
The Executive and Staff of CFFO wish all members and friends a joy-filled Christmas and God's care for the New Year.



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Jonathan's Christmas

...continued from page 13.

But when Jonathan presented his Christmas to Prince Aidan, the prince lost what strength he had and his head drooped onto the gray dusty ground. "But," said Jonathan, "this is what you wanted, isn't it? You said I was to share my Christmas. Here it is! Oh, why isn't it working?"

"Have you forgotten something, Jonathan?" asked Mendel.

"Well, I don't think so." Jonathan sat on a rock and thought. What could have gone wrong? He could see by the looks of Prince Aidan, that he did not have much time left. He tried to remember all the things his mother and father had told him about Christmas. What was missing? What was it?

Then Jonathan stood up and rushed to Mendel. "I know! I know what it is, Mendel. It is the Christmas story. That's what it's all about. Please, Mendel, hurry! Bring me the storybook so that I might read the Christmas story to the prince!" Again, Mendel wrapped his mighty wings about himself and was gone.

Jonathan was feeling very tired and growing rather cold. He lay down in the dry leaves to rest. As he lay on the ground, he looked up through the dark bare branches at the steel-gray sky. He felt lonely and frightened. Oh, why was Mendel taking so long? Jonathan shivered, wrapped his arms about himself and slowly drifted off to sleep.

When Jonathan awoke, Mendel stood before him with a well-read book in his hand. There was a chill in the air and a murky-gray snow was falling over the kingdom of Calandra. "I'm awfully cold," said Jonathan. "I wish you'd brought my mitts and toque along."

"Here is the book, as you ordered, my son," said Mendel. Please, before it is too late!" Mendel turned Jonathan toward the bird-prince.

"This is it, now," thought Jonathan. He knelt before Prince Aidan and began to read. But as Jonathan read the Christmas story, the eyes of the prince began to close and he sank still more lifeless to the ground.

Jonathan turned back to Mendel. "Oh, this is not fair," cried Jonathan. "I can't do this! It's too hard! I want to go home now. My aunts and uncles are coming for Christmas dinner and, oh boy, will I be in trouble if I don't show up on time! Someone else has to do this!"

"Be still now, Jonathan," said Mendel gently. "Listen to your heart. Prince Aidan has something to say to you. Go to him. He is weak."

Jonathan crept cautiously up to the bird-prince and put his ear close to Aidan's beak. The prince stretched his head out toward Jonathan's ear. He could barely whisper. "Shall I never fly again, child of Christmas?" asked the prince.

Jonathan thought of the joy he knew in the flight of the swallow and the bright orange flash of the oriole across the marsh. He saw in his memory the bright blue of the jays and the soaring flight of the hawks over the meadow near his home. He picked up the limp Prince Aidan and cupped him in his hands. He stroked his cheek against his gray feathers and he felt the brokenness of Prince Aidan's realm inside of his own heart. Jonathan held the bird-prince close to him and breathed on him his warm breath until his eyes flooded with tears. "I love you, Prince Aidan," said Jonathan. "I love your flight and your song. Please live!" Jonathan breathed into his cupped hands again, a warm and healing breath that surrounded the bird-prince. And before his wondering eyes and tear-streaked face, Jonathan saw Prince Aidan come to life!

And as the prince came to life, the realm of Calandra was restored with him. The heavy air lifted and the murky snow vanished, leaving woodland flowers and meadows of green. The woods began to stir with life and the long tall grasses of the fields began to wave and whisper in the warm gentle breeze. Stars sang and rained star-dust over Calandra and the forest animals played. Fish darted about and swam once more in the fresh cool streams. Finally, the rainbow slowly turned light tints of soft colour, which gradually brightened until it was gleaming with the brilliant colours it had been given at the dawn of time. And all over the realm, there was a celebration with Jonathan's tree and gifts, his feast and his telling of the Christmas story.

Jonathan rejoiced and became fast friends with the bird-prince Aidan.

"I should like so very much," said the prince, "that you stay and rule my kingdom with me, Jonathan."

Mendel rose and extended his hand. "You must come now, Jonathan."

"I shall never forget you," said Jonathan to Prince Aidan. "You will always live and sing and fly through my thoughts and within my heart."

"Jonathan's land needs Christmas too," replied Mendel. "Prince Jonathan shall rule within his own land."

"I should like you to take with you my crown," said Prince Aidan. He placed his small crown in Jonathan's hand.

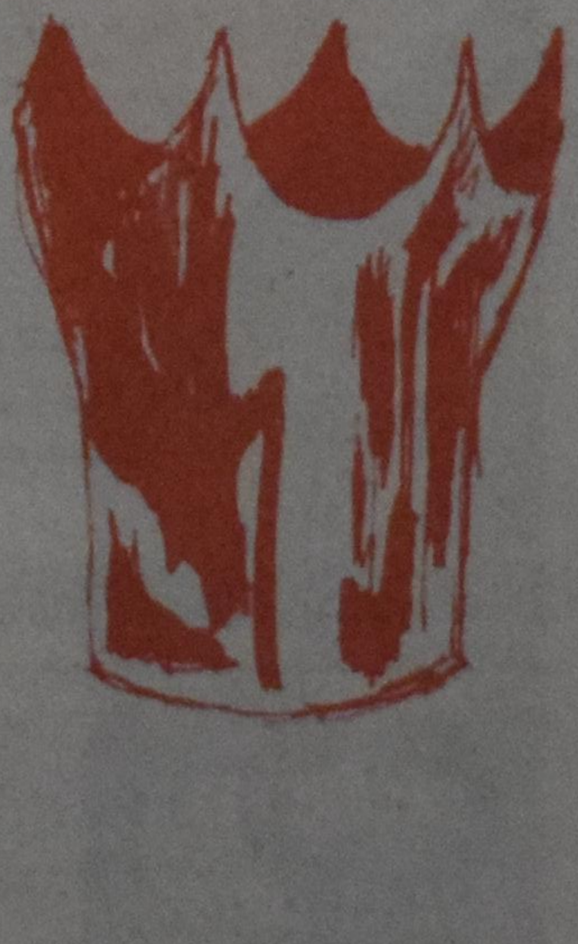
"Come now," said Mendel. Jonathan approached Mendel who wrapped him once more within his powerful wing.

In the cold blanket of a snow angel, Jonathan gazed at the clear blue sky. Rufus licked Jonathan's face and tugged on his coat sleeve. His mother was calling him in for the Christmas celebration. As Jonathan shook the snow off his coat and stomped his boots on the cold white ground, he plunged his hand deep into his pocket and held in its warmth a small gold crown.

Notes:
"Jonathan's Christmas" was written to be read aloud to children aged 6-10.

Meaning of the names used:
Jonathan — Jehovah's gift
Mendel — wise
Calandra — lark
Aidan — little fiery one

Mary Steenland is a painter and author. She lives in Pickering, Ontario.



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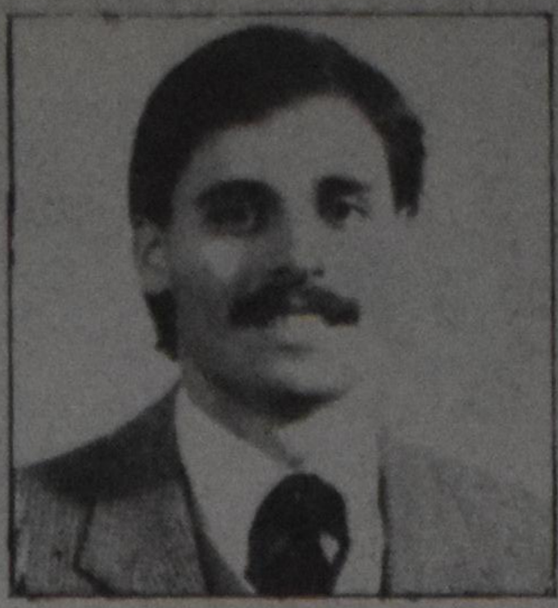
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Christmas and Camping! These two have more in common than we might think. The Incarnation meant that God became a man, but more particularly, an infant and a child. His coming to earth introduced Jesus to the world of childhood experiences never to be forgotten in later years when the tests of character and devotion to His divinely-appointed task confronted Him.

Camping within a Christian context often means a radical introduction to a brand new world. As such, it is one of those essentially formative, childhood experiences by which children are introduced not only to the delights of nature, but to many of the character-developing encounters which equip them to live life in the fullest God-honouring way. It takes more than a healthy environment to grow a child of God. The love of Christ radiating through dedicated leaders leaves an indelible mark on campers' hearts.

As you celebrate this Christmas, why not consider how you might have a significant part in this process of helping children to grow "in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and men!" (Luke 2:52)

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Establishing religious traditions

Alyce Oosterhuis

Having attended college in the '60s, I came of age in a period of time when traditions were questioned, violated and/or even blasphemed. The family after-dinner Bible reading was reduced in its impact to a fragmented irrelevant exercise. Father's prayers were perceived as bombastic child-exhorting monologues. The ritual of reading Psalm 90 prior to the beginning of the New Year was often parodied among students whose parents did the same. Yet in spite of the criticisms and verbally violent outbursts, my parents persisted in adhering to the traditions and practices they had always followed.

Upon beginning marriage, we abandoned those traditions: instead of reading a portion of scriptures at mealtimes, I would read a book of the Bible after coffee in the evening; instead of praying before and after meals we agreed to pray at the beginning of the meal; instead of reading Psalm 90, we would reminisce over the year with friends and say "skol" when the clocks chimed 12. But as the years progressed and commitments and involvements became greater, the times for whole book Bible readings became fewer until they were no more; the prayers before dinner became more perfunctory so that the food wouldn't get cold; the parties at New Year's became louder and wilder and we talked of the future rather than the past. Having stripped ourselves of our familial traditions, our practices began to have little biblical content and certainly no piety.

Now that we are in the '80s and have two young children (ages four and seven), we have begun to question "How will our children have faith?" in a vein similar to that questioned by J. Westerhof in his book of that title. Our parental traditions established a basis from which we could lash out, experiment, cajole. From their traditions we did learn biblical content, we were confronted with piety, we knew that God is, was, and always will be here and there. Without their traditions as the educational forum for our family, how were our children to be educated and led to a world-and-life view that had become dear to us in the past two decades?

Something old and new

On the basis of a number of principles we chose to begin family traditions which my parents may have taken for granted. Principles of modelling, nurturing in the Lord, continuities between home and Christian school, practising what is preached, emulating piety, familial togetherness, led us to re-establish the tradition of Bible reading after dinner. There are significant differences: we read a children's version of the Bible which is understandable to them and will sustain their interest; we discuss the Bible story when there are questions; we sing songs appropriate to the message; it is infrequently father who reads the Bible story.

Prayer is once again encouraged in our home; discouraged are the rote prayers we had to repeat at the end of meals and at bedtime. Prayer at bedtime has become a precious sharing time as we reflect on the day's events and the days to come. Our seven-year-old uses this time to pose his theological questions such as: "Will we become angels when we die?" Our four-year-old will muse how it can be that God can live in her heart when her heart is inside of her and God is everywhere. I have embellished on some of the concepts by assuring them that there are angels around their beds while they sleep. One of the greatest night-time controversies now centres on whether a four-year-old can have more than four angels and how crowded it must be around mom and dad's bed with 86 angels. Bedtime traditions have become so important to all of us that we try to schedule babysitters to come in after the rituals have been completed.

Focus on Christmas and Easter

It is this concrete yet mystical and sometimes magical experiencing of their faith that encouraged us not only to re-establish traditions but to go beyond our familial backgrounds to a construction of our own elaborate religious traditions. Knowing that children learn by doing, by participation, by playing, drawing, acting out, we decided to focus on two events of great importance in the church calendar and the Christian's experience of faith: Christmas and Easter. Recognizing that children enjoy order and predictability, we began to establish a pattern of sameness to the events surrounding those festive occasions. Acknowledging that the influences of Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny are all-pervasive to our children in this secular society, we chose to reinterpret these characters and minimize their impacts on our children.

In deciding on our traditions' mould we chose the eight-day format of the Jewish Hanukkah for our Christmas celebrations. Eight days also become the forum for our Easter celebration. We could have chosen five or 12 or whatever number was deemed to be suitable; eight worked out best in terms of our family practices and liturgical liberties. A specific theme was selected for each celebration so that aspects of the theme could be unfolded in the course of the eight days.

Thus, last Christmas, the theme of God's covenantal faithfulness was unfolded in terms of: day 1 — the Fall; day 2: the promise; day 3: the maintenance of the promise; day 4: the messengers of the promise's specifics; day 5: the response of Mary; day 6: the site of the promise; day 7: the fulfilment in the stable; day 8: the shepherds' and wise men's response.

At Easter time the theme focused on the good and evil experienced in that week: day 1: Christ's triumphal entry and His tears; day 2: the curse of the fig tree and the jubilance of children; day 3: the story of the day of judgment and the maidens' readiness/unpreparedness; day 4: the anointing of Jesus and the betrayal of Jesus; day 5: washing the disciples' feet and the Last Supper; day 6: the crucifixion and its pain and hope; day 7: the waiting of the faithful and the Pharisees' fears of a resurrection; day 8: the Resurrection as the final triumph.

Various rituals

For each day of our family liturgy we selected specific stories from our children's Bible (Anne De Vries) and discussed them in the context of the week's celebration. To involve the children and to make the theme as concrete as possible we also made wall hangings depicting the various stories. The children made drawings of their story selection and I cut their forms and figures out of various textiles which they then pasted to their respective sides of the hangings. As the week progressed the hangings approached completion and on the culminating day, i.e. Christmas and Easter, the newly-constructed hanging was placed in front of the picture window so that, as our children said, "everyone can enjoy it."

Other rituals have become entwined with the various celebrations: the Christmas week begins with the trimming of the tree as a symbol of life in our cold northern climate with ornaments from past Christmas experiences. Each year a new ornament is presented to each child for the tree. To avoid the pitfalls of having too much at once, too little when holiday boredom sets in, and to resolve the dilemma of Sinterklaas or Santa Claus, each consecutive day in our celebration brings a small gift under the tree. In that fashion, gifts from grandparents, aunts and uncles, parents can be enjoyed throughout the week for at least one full day. The Boxing Day let-down is much less intense when a family has celebrated Christmas for more than a week.

Other rituals such as lighting candles after supper, singing carols, making gingerbread houses, have now been given specific meanings and time in the week's celebration. At Easter celebration time, the bunny has become an irrelevant non-issue although we do paint eggs on Palm Sunday; the Last Supper is remembered in a special way as we now "traditionally" sit down to a "gourmet" (racqlette?) family dinner; the drapes are drawn on the Saturday.

Looking ahead

As our family experiences these various traditions, the rituals become more embellished and with everyone's involvements, more meaningful. It may be that as the years progress some aspects will be deleted or changed — there are few "absolutes" in the specifics of the traditional rituals. What I do know, however, is that Christmas and Easter have become very rich and forward-looking experiences for the whole family. In many ways our children are being educated to look for meaning behind rituals and traditions, to identify with them as their own, to explain to their neighbourhood friends why we do what we do, to share their joy with others, to see that in the home, school and church, there is a continuity of experience.

It may well be that as our children approach adolescence, they will rebel and participate in sulky, recalcitrant fashion to satisfy their "old folks' whims and foibles." But until and even when that day comes, we, like our parents, will continue to adhere to the traditions and practices we have developed throughout the years. And, hopefully, like their parents, our adolescents will eventually maintain that biblical knowledge, personal piety, and the experience of God's redeeming work in our lives, demand to be expressed in some recognizable and tangible forms.

Alyce Oosterhuis is assistant professor in Education at The King's College in Edmonton, Alberta.

Four children's songs for the Christian community

Bert Witvoet

I have pleasant childhood-in-Holland memories. I remember singing children's songs, in two- or three-part harmony, with two older brothers and a sister, while lying in our beds in the attic. We had learned the songs in the classrooms of the local Christian school.

Now that I am an adult, fully integrated into the Canadian scheme of things, fragments of those songs will surface from somewhere deep in my subconscious mind. I might be waiting in a garage for our car to be repaired, and before I know it I find myself humming one of those "attic" tunes.

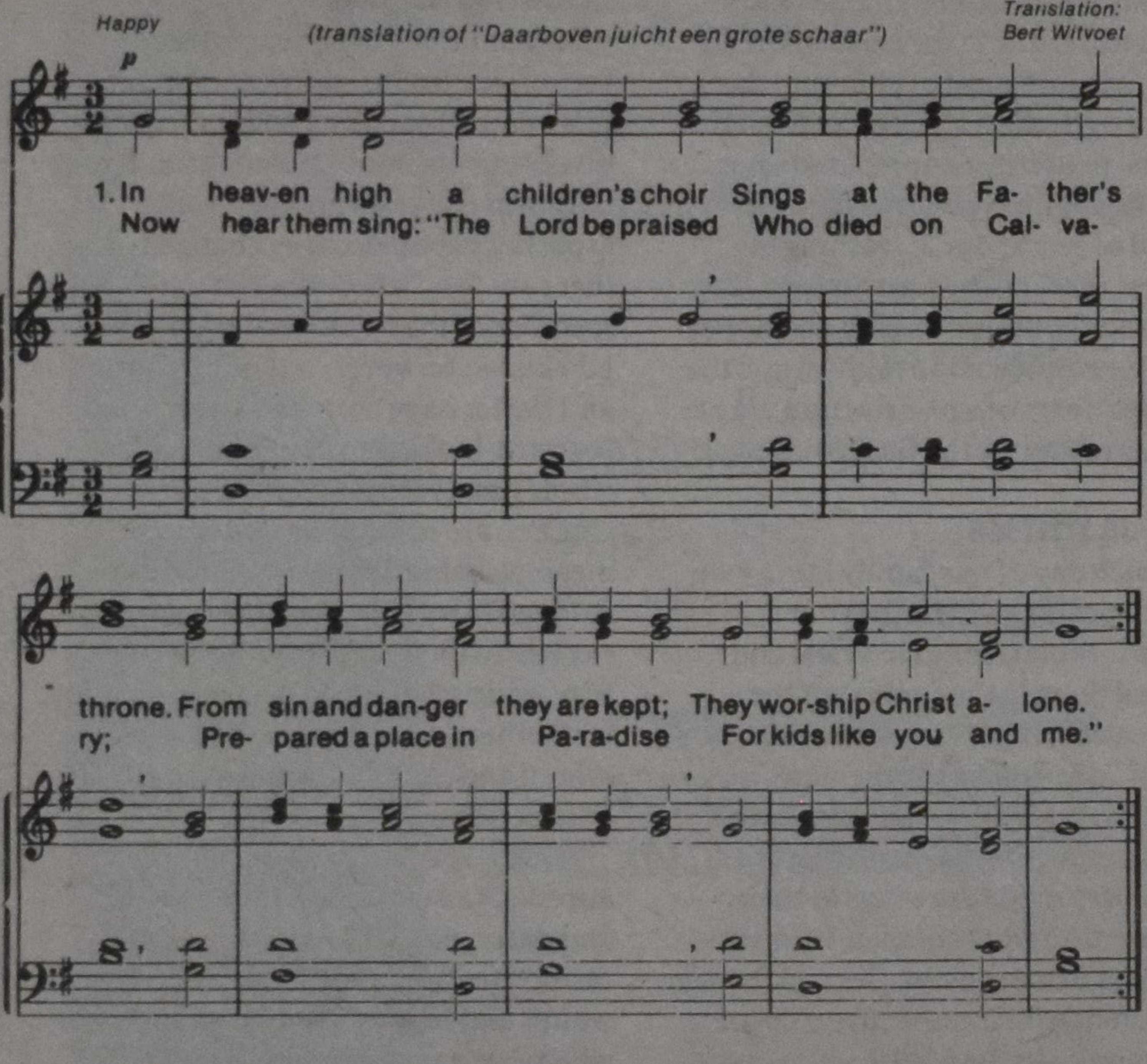
I think of our children. What kind of treasury of songs are they storing in their Christian-home-and-school moulded hearts and minds? Do Christian songs in two- or three-part harmony still sound from dark bedrooms?

The questions led to a resolve. I decided to translate a few of my childhood songs into English, for the benefit of Christian homes and schools in North America. Translating a song from one language into another is not an impossible task. I am not quite sure, though, whether the past can be translated into the future. But it's worth a try, isn't it?

I place no restrictions on these songs for informal use in home, school and church, wanting parents and teachers to use them freely.

Although we publish them in the Christmas issue of **Calvinist Contact,** *they are not Christmas songs. Let's just say they are a Christmas gift from Calvinist Contact to the Christian community. (from C.C. to Cc)*

The children's choir



2. How did these children get to heaven?
They followed Jesus' voice.
Believed the words He spoke to them,
And now they all rejoice.
Now hear them sing, etc.

3. While here on earth, they were His own,
As faith within them grew.
They loved the Lord and asked of Him,
What can I do for you?
Now hear them sing, etc.

4. Though they were young and very sweet,
Their hearts were soiled by sin.
But Jesus took them, young and small,
And washed them clean again.
Now hear them sing, etc.

5. We with our parents wish to learn
The children's choral song.
Oh, dearest Jesus, live in us,
So we can sing along.
Now hear us sing, etc.

Note:

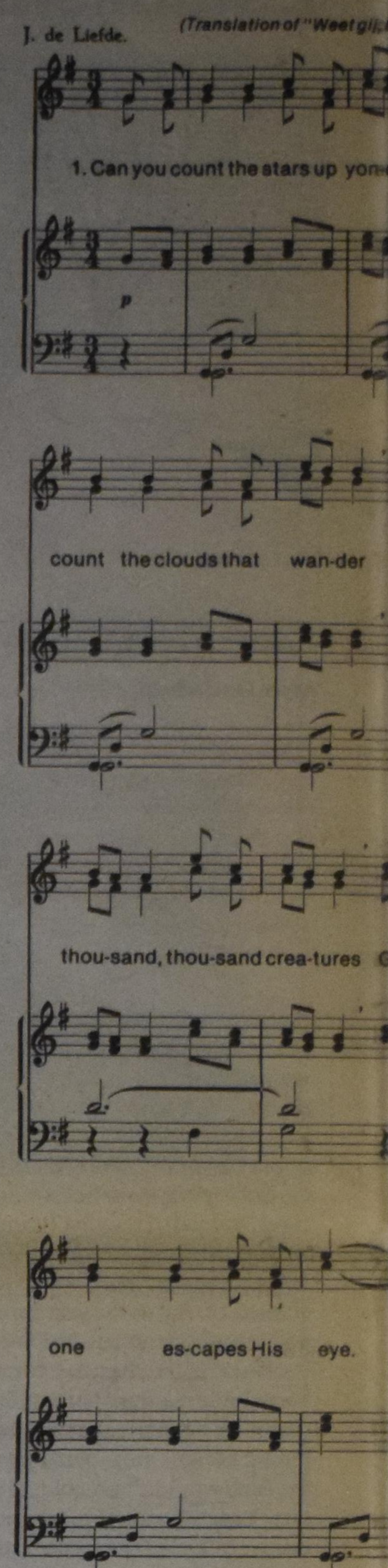
I changed the intent and words of a few stanzas, finding them a little too pietistic. For example, verse three in the Dutch original says that the children while still on earth loved the Lord and ***continually*** *asked what they could do for Him. That word "continually" is a little problematic for those who know kids.*

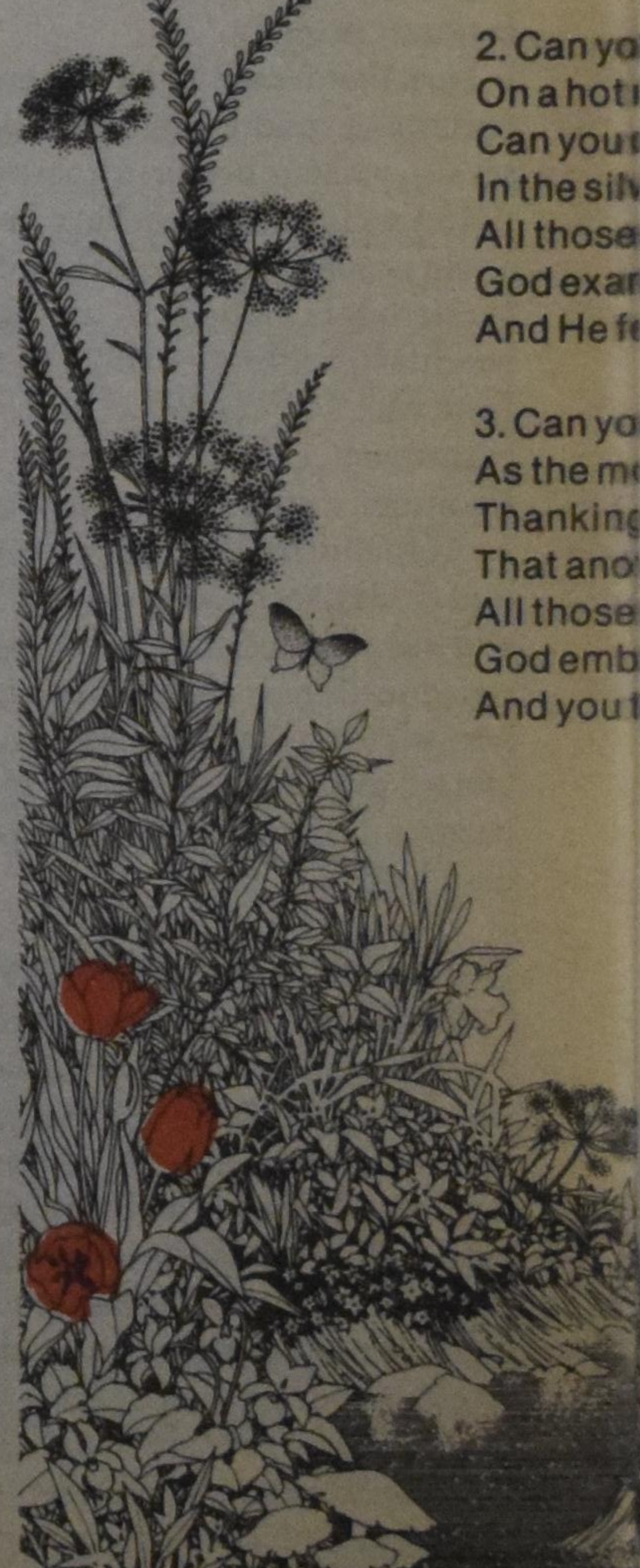
The final stanza has the children on earth saying that they also wish to go to heaven and will the Lord please accept them so they can forever sing along. The words can mean that they eventually wish to go to heaven, but it sounds as if they want to go now. At any rate, it's a little much to ask of children that they long for heaven. For the time being their task is to be with their parents. That's why I have them express the wish that they, with their parents, may learn the new song. Sounds more covenantal and obedient to me.

At the same time, I like the song. It must be comforting for parents who lose a child and for children who lose a little brother or sister to know that their loved one is with Jesus in heaven. To imagine the child being part of a large children's choir is not too farfetched. Since praising God is our purpose on earth and in heaven, it is good to establish a kind of musical harmony between earth and heaven. This song does that better than any other song I know.

The melody of the verses and refrain is the same. Therefore, I would suggest that some variety be gained by having the verses sung by one child or a small group of children. The refrain should be sung by the full choir or class.

Can you co





2. Can yo
On a hot
Can you
In the silv
All those
God exar
And He f

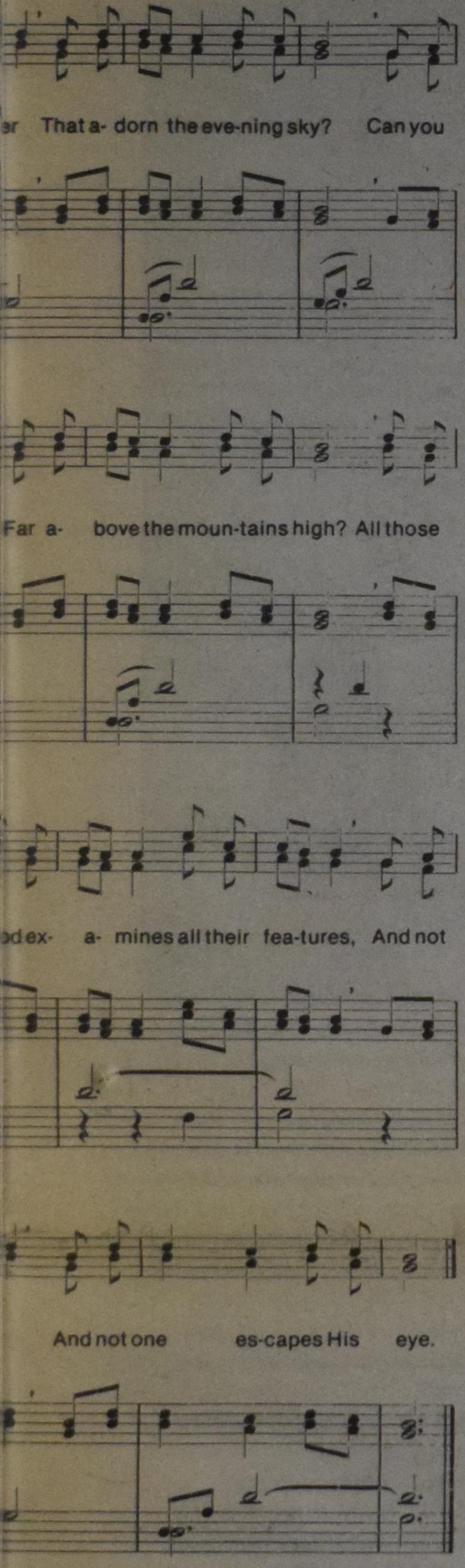
3. Can yo
As the m
Thanking
That ano
All those
God emb
And you f

unt the stars?

neveel sterren kleven?")

Translation: Bert Witvoet

J. de Liefde.



count the insects skimming
nid-summer day?
ount the small fish swimming
ry waterway?
housand, thousand creatures —
ines all their features,
eds them while they play.

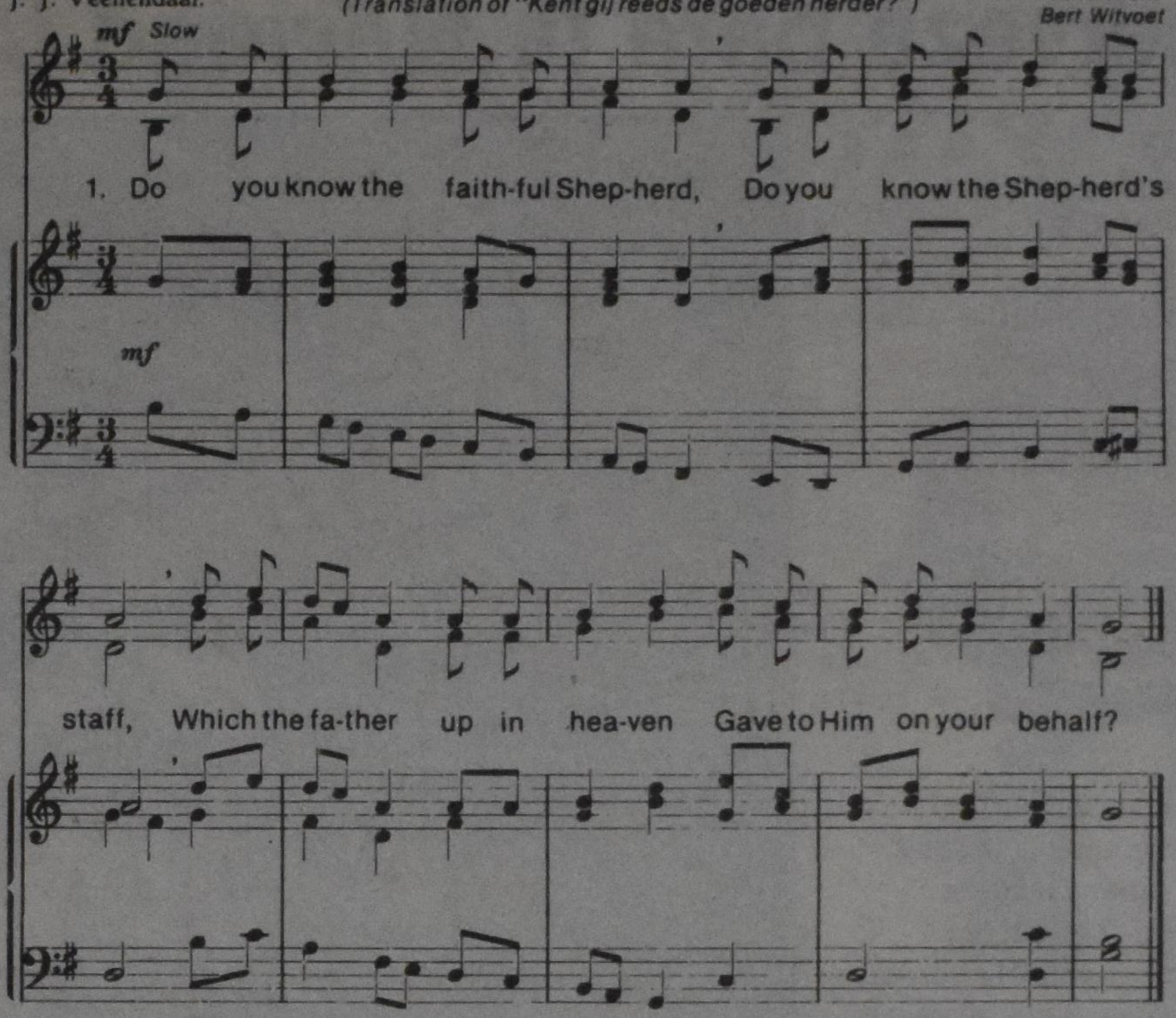
count the children kneeling
rning light breaks clear,
God with happy feeling,
her day is near?
housands in their number
aced them in their slumber,
o He holds so dear.

Do you know the faithful shepherd?

J. J. Veenendaal.

(Translation of "Kent gij reeds de goeden herder?")

Translation: Bert Witvoet



2. Did a lamb stray from the others?
Leave the flock against His will?
He returns to search in the desert,
In the valley, on the hill.

3. In the cleft He spies the lost
lamb;
Filled with love descends the rock.
Happy with the load on his
shoulders,
He returns it to the flock.

4. Do you in this world of danger
Want this shepherd close to you?
Do you wish to be His beloved?
Yes, He died also for you.

5. Dearest Jesus, friend of children,
When you're near, who can be sad?
For to know you is so exciting.
And to love you makes us glad.

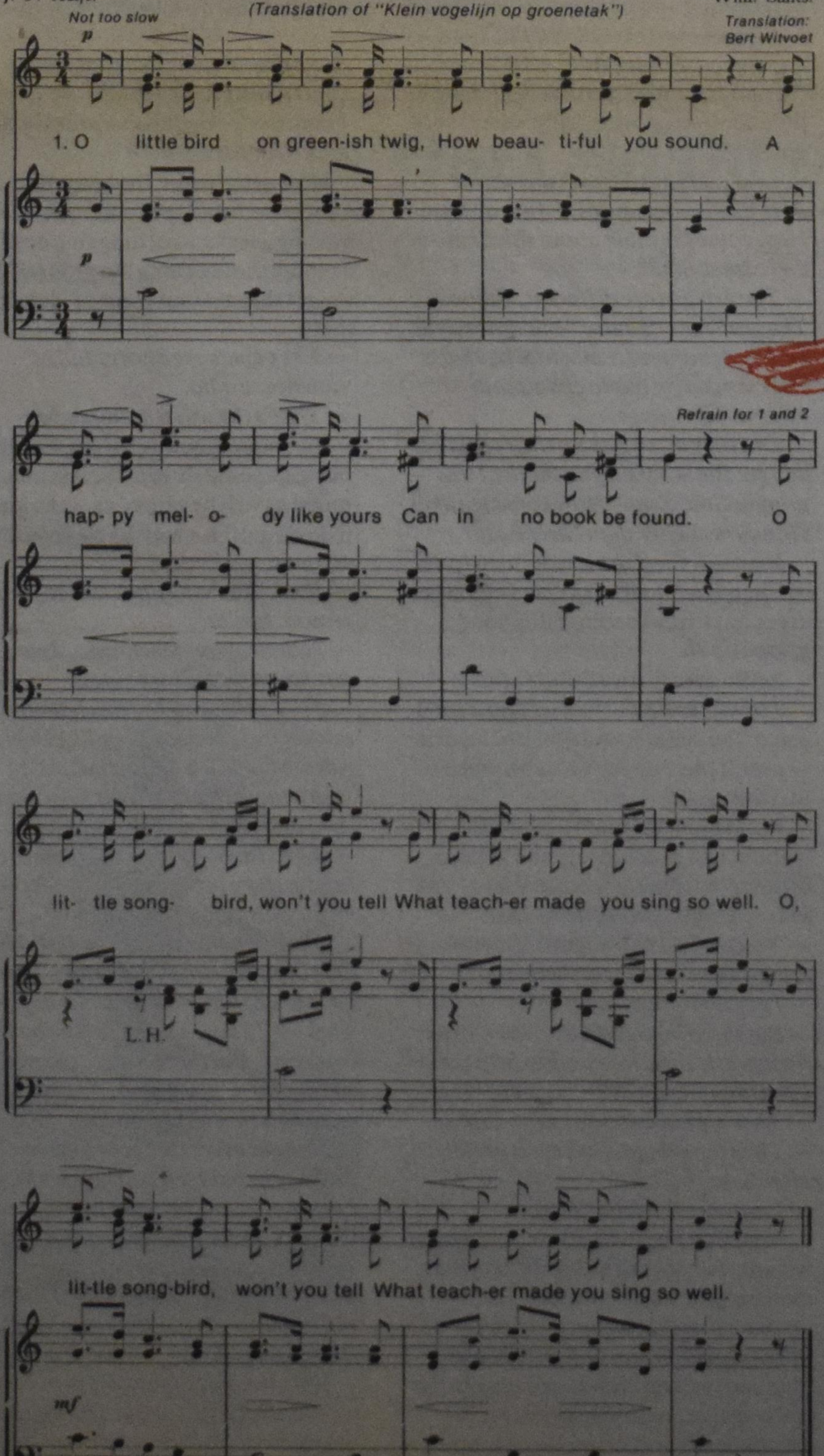
Little Songbird

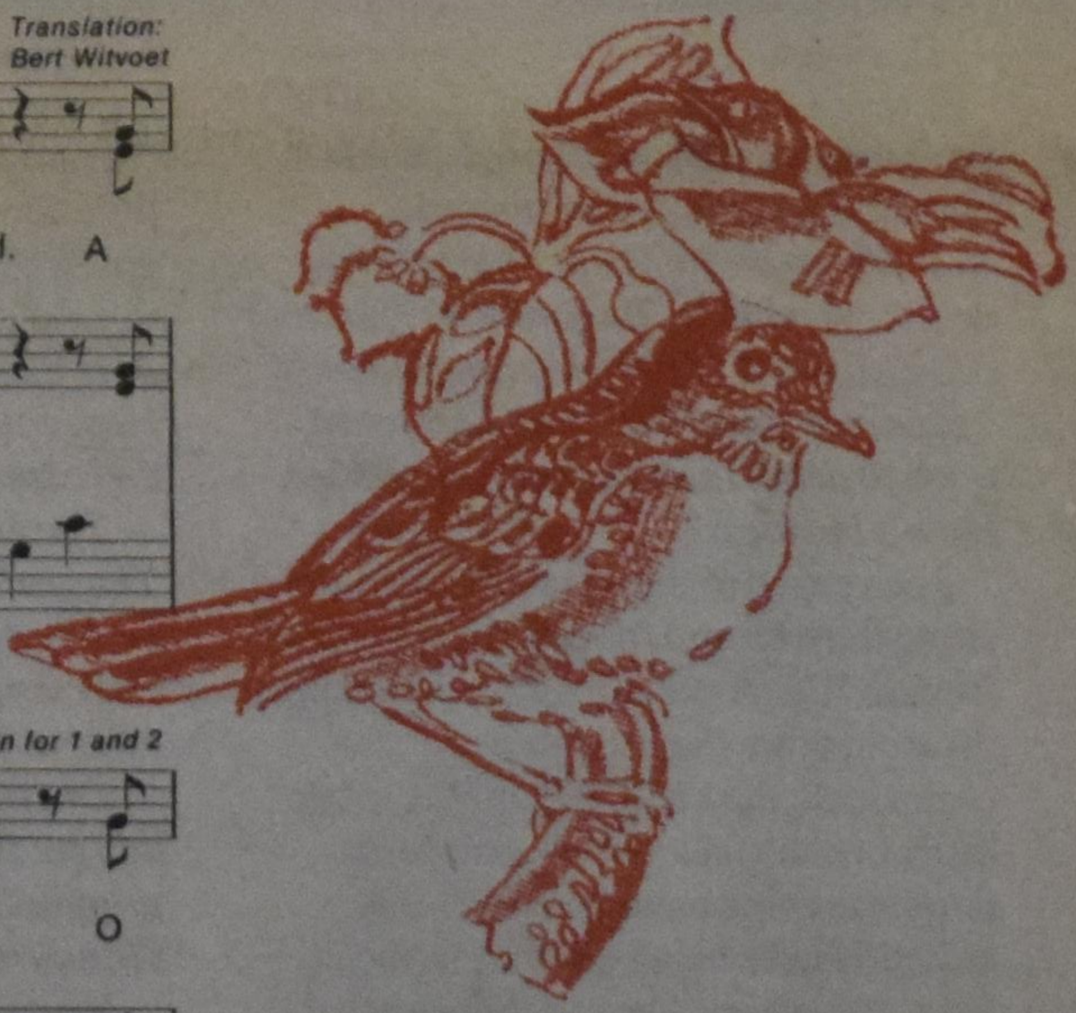
J. P. Heije.

(Translation of "Klein vogelijn op groenetak")

Wilh. Smits.

Translation: Bert Witvoet





2. You sing your song with even
beat,
So pure and high your note.
Our hearts respond in equal time
When tunes burst from your throat.

3. Most certainly, our loving God
Has trained you in the wood;
And now the blind may hear you
sing,
And say that God is good.

(Refrain for 3)
O yes, we know, no need to tell;
God taught you how to sing so well.
(Repeat)

Una cerveza para la Navidad (A beer for Christmas)

Frank Sawyer

The rains had stopped several weeks ago. The red clay hills seemed to be getting dustier every day. Well, at least the hurricane season hadn't been violent this year. Some drought in the dry season in Choluteca, people going hungry; some floods during the rainy weeks, a few squatter shanties washed away. But no real violence like a hurricane.

Strange how human and natural violence is always the news of the day. Last week it was a shoot-out in the province of Olancho. Yesterday a banana truck just ran right off a cliff on the way to Tegucigalpa. And, of course, the machineguns trying to break up that *Contra* meeting some weeks back, that was noisy all right, especially at three in the morning.

— Edilio, you ever heard of a day when the newspapers didn't talk of violence?

— No, Juan, never been that kind of day here.

They laughed. Not that that was so funny, of course.

— Listen, Edilio, you surprised I'm drinking this beer?

— Well, yes and no, Juan.

— That's because you think that I shouldn't drink, being an **anciano** *in the church and all that, no?*

— ***Si, amigo.***

The sun was hot, the banana leaves provided some shade, though, next to the shack where they were sitting.

— Well, we don't like people getting drunk, you know. But one beer, just ***una cerveza****, is OK. This is my one and only Christmas beer. That's why I crossed town to drink this in your store,* ***amigo.*** *How's business?*

Juan gazed at the rough wooden slats along the wall and the mud brick foundation. A curtain hung separating the store from the bedroom. A cockroach, dark red, two inches long, lazily bent its feelers back and forth among the ripe bananas that hung patiently in bunches on dirty twine from the rafters. Next to these hung the green bake bananas, colourful beside the braids of garlic. On the left, next to the old refrigerator with a sagging door stood a drum of kerosene that was tapped into empty rum bottles for the lanterns in the ***barrio.***

— Business is not much good with all those big fancy places they got these days. Mostly I sell some coffee and milk, some bananas and rice. That's about it. And the kids always scraping pennies for candies. Wretched little urchins always seem to want candy.

Edilio looked at Juan and sighed.

Juan looked at his *una cerveza.* This had to last a while, maybe until next Christmas. He remembered the first year after he had joined the little *iglesia* that the *misionero* had built in their barrio and how he had got a little drunk that time, not being used to it anymore. But he had learned. Only *una cerveza.* It was better that way. For his family, too. He could see that. But sometimes he missed the parades with *María* and *los santos* and the drinking of the old religion. And the quiet tall heights inside the cathedral, the candles to pray for the dead, the choir ... But then, one can't have everything, can he?

— Tell me, Juan ... this ***gringo****-God of* ***los misioneros****, do you think He has a white beard like their Santo Grande of Christmas? They call him* ***Santo****, don't they?*

— Something like that, Edilio. Juan measured a careful sip hoping it wasn't the half-way mark yet, the beginning of the end. *Una cerveza* really wasn't very much.

— Look, I thought ***los evangelicos*** *didn't have any* ***santos****,* Edilio queried. *How come they talk about this* ***Santo*** *at Christmas time?*

— The ***gringos*** *are different, Edilio. They call him* **"Santa,"** *but how can a man be feminine?* ***Santa María****, that's clear language; but to call a* ***santo*** *"Santa" is strange.*

— Oh, they often mix up their ***espanol, amigo****. But what do you think of this* ***gringo****-God, Juan? How come He likes Honduras better than Nicaragua?*

Juan saw the glass was about to pass the imaginary half-way line. But rules are rules, that was something good ***gringo-faith.***

Edilio eyed Juan a little craftily.

— Tell me, ***amigo*** — he said and leaned across the counter and touched his arm *— aren't there any of those* ***misioneros*** *in Nicaragua?*

Juan rubbed his chin and felt the stubble absent-mindedly and licked a little froth from his moustache. — *You know, Edilio, I think there are.*

— You see? Edilio laughed. *Doesn't the* ***gringo****-God send them there, too?*

— I guess He must, ***amigo.***

— But the ***gringo caudillo****, you know, their* ***presidente****, he wants to help the* ***Contras****, doesn't he?*

— That's what everyone says, Edilio.

— Then the ***gringo****-God must prefer Honduras, you see?*

— I suppose He does, then.

Juan watched the cockroach creep its wine-brown thorax along the bananas, twitching its feelers and feet. He remembered that a quartet with Mexican *sombreros* and *panchos* with blue and red scarfs had once sang in the town square, stamping their feet emphatically and strumming guitars with gusto:

"La cucaracha, la cucaracha,
Ya no puede caminar:
Porque le falta, porque le falta,
Una pata para andar."

("The cockroach, the cockroach,
can't move far anymore:
because it's missing, it's missing,
a foot for the floor.")

How often hadn't he himself swatted a cockroach and seen it limp away missing a leg or two, dragging or sliding its shiny thorax along the ground? But wasn't that a minor piece of violence, too?

— The papers are always full of violence, Edilio.

— That's the way it seems to be.

One more mouthful. Even though one begins sipping slowly, the last mouthful might as well be generous. Juan gulped it down and clunked the glass onto the counter.

— Well, that's my ***una cerveza*** *for this season, Edilio.*

— I admire your ***machismo****, Juan. A guy has to set his own rules.*

— That's the secret of this ***iglesia*** *of the* ***misioneros****, amigo. They like clear rules. Maybe it's better that way. I've seen people clean up their lives like this. And that is saying a lot, isn't it?*

— Sure, Juan. At least they sing lots and fast up there in the ***barrio****, don't they! I mean with guitars and all that?*

— That's another thing, ***amigo****. They let the youth do a lot in the* ***cultos****. I would have liked that when I was young and working 12 hours a day for the banana company. But there weren't so many* ***iglesias*** *then, you know.*

— How's the family, Juan?

— Same as ever. Our youngest can't find work, but I tell you he's willing. Last summer he lost everything when the ***maiz*** *dried right up on the stalks. Then he whacked his foot with a* ***machete*** *cutting some brush. I tell him it will be better this coming new year,* ***si Dios quiere.***

— Well, ***amigo****, it's always problems for us, too. Our Rosa doesn't do any more typing for the office since the government changed. What do elections help when the government jobs keep changing?*

— I don't know, ***amigo****. Up by our* ***barrio*** *the shanties are covering the next hillside already. People have to walk further every month for firewood. How can you make* ***tortillas*** *without a fire? And sometimes there is no water at the pump.*

— That's the way it is, no? If I were young I'd move out somewhere and find empty land.

— Land? There's lots of it, but they chase you off ...

— ***Si, amigo, Another cerveza?***

— No, Edilio. I stick to my rule. It's better like this. But I'll see you again.

— Take care, then. ***Adios.***

— ***Dios le bendiga.***

— ***un momento****, Juan. Ask the* ***gringo misionero*** *if God prefers Honduras or Nicaragua.*

— I don't know, Edilio ... is that a good question?

— Do it for me, ***amigo****. If the* ***misionero*** *doesn't know, ask him why He is their* ***gringo****-God, then.*

— Are you sure there are ***misioneros*** *in Nicaragua, too, Edilio?*

— Sure there are. Ask the ***misionero.***

Frank Sawyer is a missionary for the Christian Reformed Church in Honduras.

Get rid of Christmas pornography

Henry Wildeboer

Christmas is coming and that excites all of us in one way or another. I surely do not desire to be a spoiler, but it's time to know the origin of the Christmas celebrations.

In the third Century AD, Roman emperor Constantine was converted to Christianity. This caused great joy for the church as he decreed that Christianity would be the religion of the empire. Thus the church could come out of its hiding and go open and public, and the public was urged to become Christian. To the delight of Constantine, thousands did.

However, problems developed. "What do we do with all our earlier gods and all our great feasts and celebrations, especially the winter solstice and spring equinox?" Before the mass conversions, the entire empire lustily celebrated these great occasions. Many were simply unwilling and unprepared to give up these long hallowed events. For the "unconverted converts" it did not take long to find a solution incorporating the best of both.

From sun to Son

In response to this restlessness, Constantine declared two major religious holidays corresponding exactly to the dates of the earlier pagan celebrations. December 25, celebrated as Saturnalia (the birthday of the sun) became the birthday of the Son (Christ). A great mass would be held in honour of Christ, thus Christ - mas(s).

Constantine also made the old holiday (the spring equinox) to become the celebration of Christ's resurrection. The old party worshipped the goddess of fertility (from which we likely inherited our Easter bunny, which like its cousin the rabbit multiplied rapidly).

And the people quit grumbling. They had a Christian faith and they could continue their celebrations — the best of both worlds.

Glossy temptations

Very frankly, I am afraid things haven't changed much, even in the church. Is there really any doubt as to what God thinks of our syncretistic (look that one up in the dictionary!) celebrations? It's time for firm action as we approach the season and as the Christmas "pornography" again floods our homes — ads via TV, papers and pamphlets that make us and our children lustful and greedy for more and more. If we throw out dirty pictures that make us lust why not the same for glossy pictures and seductive descriptions that make us greedy? Let's call it what it is!

In the meantime, God loved so much His broken world that He gave His Son for life and celebrations. Let's stop the fairytales (Santa) and the funny games and recognize that we live in a hungry world that suffers huge injustices, some of which are due to the fact that we have so much and share so little.

Surely, the meaning of love and giving can be better learned than through buying goodies for each other that no one needs. Here too, deep spiritual creativity is needed. May we have a pure and genuine celebration of the birth of Christ.

Henry Wildeboer is pastor of Zion Christian Reformed Church in Oshawa, Ontario.

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An example of syncretism: the drummer boy, who wants to play his drum for Jesus, and the toy shop which sells drums.

The historic significance of Bethlehem

In all, the significance of Bethlehem transcends the physical setting and the sacred tributes. While some visitors may know that the name "Bethlehem" is derived from either the Hebrew meaning "House of Bread" or the Arabic meaning "House of Meat," few are aware of the vast historical significance of pilgrimage to this site.

Bethlehem was deemed a holy town more than 1,500 years before the birth of Jesus when it was sanctified in the Bible as the final resting place of Rachel, the wife of the patriarch Jacob.

The Book of Ruth records that it was in the fields surrounding Bethlehem that Ruth met and fell in love with Boaz. Ruth was the great-grandmother of David who was born in Bethlehem and later called from there to become a great king of Israel.

From a tourist brochure '84.

A Christmas folk-song

The little Jesus came to town;
The wind blew up, the wind blew down;
Out in the street the wind was bold;
Now who would house Him from the cold?

Then opened wide a stable door,
Fair were the rushes on the floor;
The Ox put forth a horned head;
"Come, little Lord, here make Thy bed."

Uprose the Sheep were folded near:
"Thou Lamb of God, come, enter here."
He entered there to rush and reed,
Who was the Lamb of God indeed.

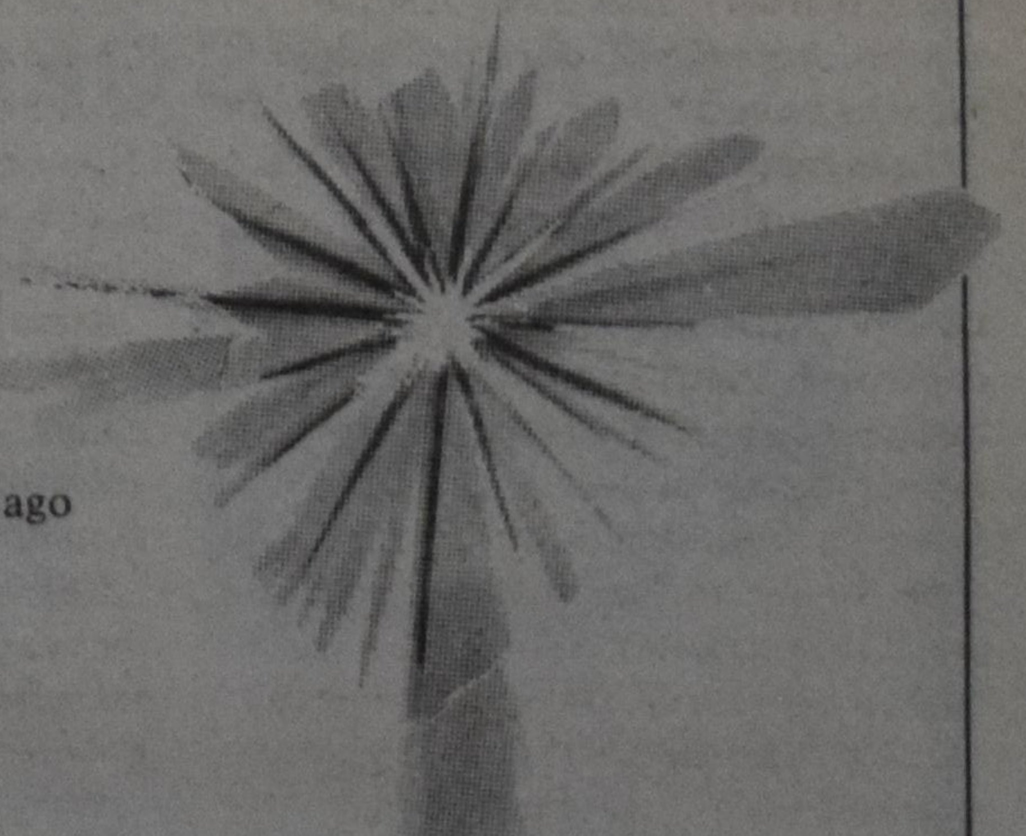
The little Jesus came to town;
With ox and sheep He laid Him down;
Peace to the byre, peace to the fold,
For that they housed Him from the cold!

Lizette Woodworth Reese

The Christmas star

Hearken you ...
With your home-made worlds ...

Hear me, as I speak
From greater heights
Than any you have conquered ...



For
I also occupy this atmosphere —
Thrust forth two thousand years ago
By the very hand
That gave to you
Your genius —

Thrust forth with a brightness
That all your man-made planets
Cannot match,
And charged with a mission
The magnitude of which
The most brilliant minds among you
Cannot grasp.

Here, from this noble height,
I dispel the darkness of this world
And point with a glowing finger
To the very Source
Of Faith, and Hope, and Charity,
Consuming in my burning heat
Each sphere of hate and fear
That men may launch.

Hearken ... you
With your home-made worlds ...
I also occupy this atmosphere —
Thrust forth two thousand years ago
To light your way to Peace.

Hearken ... you
with your home-made worlds ...

I am the Christmas Star!

Author unknown
Submitted by Anje T. Groenenberg, Chatham, Ontario

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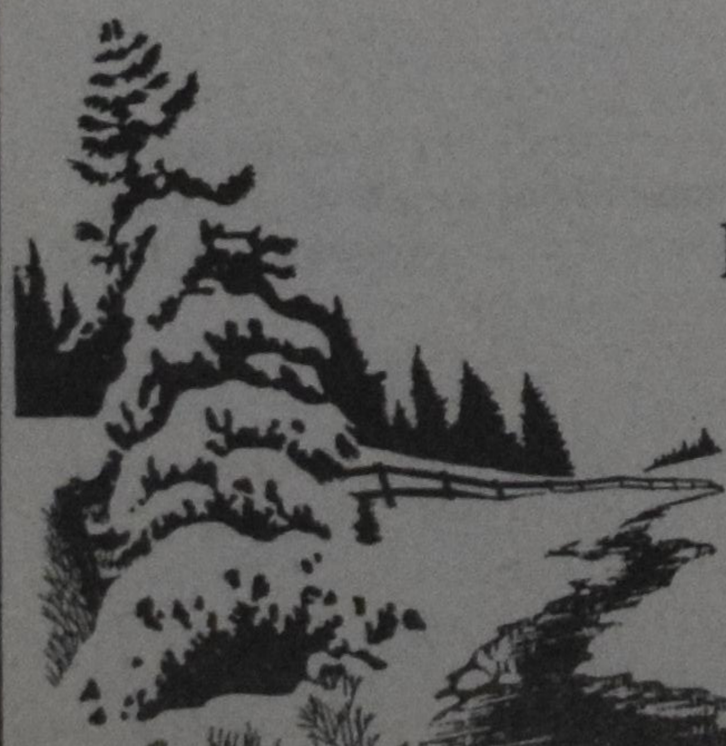

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We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all, churches and individuals alike for your contributions to our ministry, helping us help others, meeting their spiritual, physical and emotional needs.

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven

Illustrations by Doug Roorda of St. Catharines.

Berta Hosmar

It was December 1945, and Holland was beginning to recuperate from the devastation of the war which had finally ended only seven months before. With the typical resilience of children, Rita and Henk Van Dyk could forget the fear and the horror that lay behind them much quicker than the adults. True, they still ducked when they heard a plane overhead, just like everybody else, and they knew they were not to touch any strange objects which were still frequently found in ditches or wooded areas. Too many accidents were still happening when careless people found out too late that those objects were hand grenades or bombs that had failed to explode.

But on the whole, life had started to go back to normal. Schools had re-opened, work crews were cleaning up the rubble of bombed-out houses and buildings, and the stores even had a few things to sell again.

The Van Dyks did not have any soldiers living with them, but they kept a few chickens in a pen in their backyard. For a few eggs the soldiers would give Rita or Henk some bars of soap for their parents, and if they were very, very lucky, a chocolate bar for themselves. Henk would never tell anybody if he had received a chocolate bar or not, but Rita had caught him once in the outhouse, where he had hidden, and was savouring every bite with a look of utter rapture on his face, until his sister demanded her rightful share.

On this particular Friday, Rita walked home from school with her brother and some friends, feeling slightly depressed.

Rita's rather ugly mood came from the knowledge that another parcel had arrived from Michigan in America, filled with clothes "that were simply gross." Mr. Van Dyk had some cousins living there, and these people were sending their used clothes, knowing how little the stores had to sell and how the Dutch people had suffered. Rita's mom had been overjoyed when the first parcel had arrived. Neighbours and friends had simply drooled over the excellent quality of the materials, and Mrs. Van Dyk had given several items away. The dressmaker took care of the rest. She shortened pants and let out hems and took in seams, and presto, Rita and Henk were warmly dressed again.

Rita simply hated wearing a coat with a large fur collar to school, and dresses that looked different. True, more kids wore clothes that had come from overseas, but that made little difference. Henk did not seem to mind what he was wearing, but Rita had in vain tried to wreck a pair of shoes by banging on those ridiculous high heels with a hammer.

Her only consolation was that the Christmas holidays had started and that she would not have to wear those clothes till after New Year's.

When the Van Dyk kids arrived home, grandma was waiting for them, and the dressmaker had already left, which was rather unusual.

"Where's mom?" asked Henk, but grandma thoughtfully emptied her bowl of porridge before she answered. Grandma ate porridge all day long, for she was so old that she had no teeth left. She was also a little mixed-up at times, and you often had to ask the same question twice.

"Your mother is in her bedroom, don't go to her, the midwife is with her," she finally answered.

"What's going on, is the baby already coming?" asked Rita excitedly, although she knew that the new baby was not due for another two weeks. Mom had told them all about it. This particular child would be welcomed to the Van Dyk family in a very special way.

How well Rita and Henk remembered those dark, sombre days, not even a year ago, when their younger brother had died. He had been sick for only a few days, and the thought of him still often brought tears to Rita's eyes. He had been her special playmate and she still felt the pain of separation.

Knowing that God would send them another cute, cuddly baby, had lifted her spirits, and she had been knitting a blanket from left-over yarn for months now. It was almost finished. Mom had promised she could learn to bathe the baby and help her take care of it, later teach it to walk and talk. Rita hoped for a little boy. Well, if the baby would arrive early, it would be a Christmas baby.

"Your mother said you could go and buy some holly from farmer Jansen and decorate the livingroom. We have some candles left and perhaps you could make some nice centre pieces with red paper and evergreen boughs," Grandma said. Was she ever alert today! Yesterday Rita had found some sandwiches, wrapped in a pair of dirty socks, in the pantry. Gross! Clearly the work of Grandma, but Mom and Dad had strictly forbidden their kids to confront Grandma with her absent-mindedness. When Rita and Henk came home in high spirits an hour later, arms

Continued on page 25 ...

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(Luke 1:46-47)

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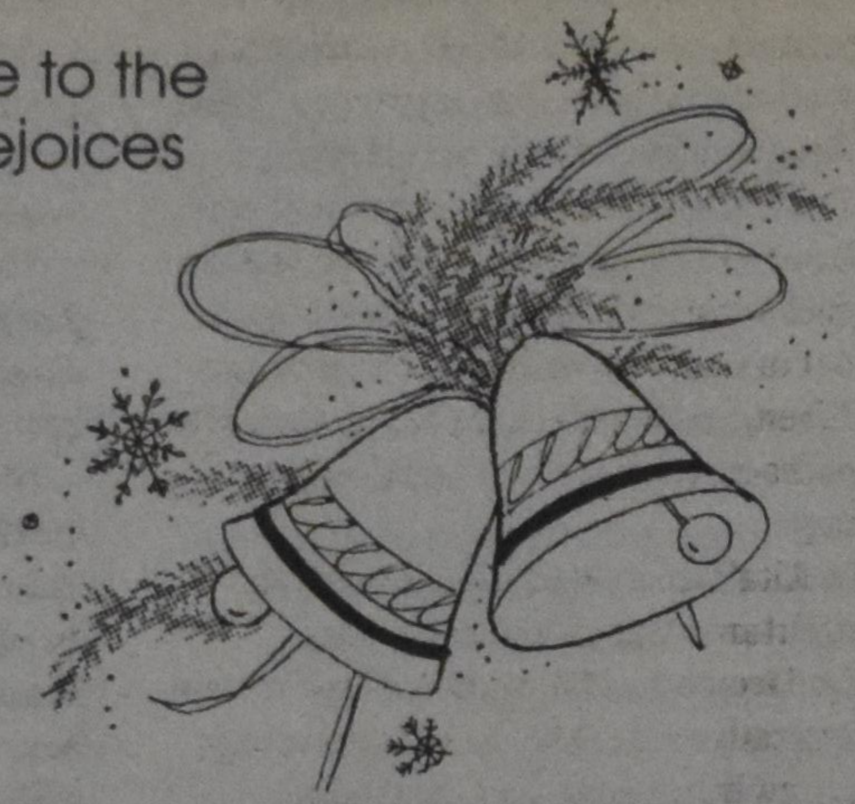

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For theirs is the Kingdom of heaven

... continued from page 23.

loaded with the red-berried branches and humming Christmas carols, they were met at the front door by Dad, who looked a little worried.

"Children, I've arranged with the neighbours that you can eat and sleep over at their house," he said hurriedly. "It looks as if the baby is coming. The doctor is on his way, but the midwife said that perhaps mom may have to go to the hospital."

Rita and her brother quickly grabbed their pyjamas, feeling vaguely uncomfortable. Why should Mom have to go to the hospital. Babies were always born at home, weren't they? Was something wrong? A sudden fear almost paralyzed Rita. What if Mom should die? That sometimes happened, didn't it? She prayed frantically. The neighbour noticed her anxiety and tried to reassure her. She handed out some games and after playing checkers for an hour, Rita had forgotten her fears. Henk was happy as usual; he never seemed to worry.

The next morning everybody woke up to a beautiful, silent, white world. The snow still came down softly. Rita jumped out of bed and looked through the window at her own house, looking so fairy-tale-like now, surrounded as it was by snow-covered trees and evergreens.

"I wonder if the baby is there yet; sometimes it takes a long time before they are born," Rita remarked to her brother. They got dressed quickly for it was cold upstairs. The water in the washbasin had a thin layer of ice on it. The worries of the previous night were forgotten. Who knows, maybe the little brother or sister had already arrived!

Downstairs the pleasant warmth of the woodstove enveloped them, and breakfast was on the table. But nobody seemed to be around. Then the back door opened and in walked Dad.

"What is it, a boy or a girl, or hasn't it been born yet, and how is Mom?" cried Rita, as Henk ran to meet his dad. That was strange; Dad did not smile. Again an icy fear took hold of Rita and she cried, "What's wrong;" Dad put his arms around his children. "Mom is just fine, only a little weak," he said. "Is it a boy or a girl?" asked Henk.

Dad hesitated. Then he said, "A little boy. But children, he lived for only a few hours."

"Do you mean he's dead!!?" cried Rita. Henk started to sob.

"I know it's hard," Dad said, and his voice trembled a little. But then he went on, "the baby would not have been well and healthy if he had lived, children. He was deformed and would likely never have been able to walk. That's probably why God took him right away. Now you have two brothers in heaven with Jesus."

During the next few days everything was rather strange. Mom had to stay in bed and sleep a lot. Kind neighbours brought soup or puddings or flowers to cheer her up. Rita and Henk had to be quiet, so they visited their friends a lot. Nobody talked about the baby anymore. The cradle had been moved to the attic and life went on.

Rita had grabbed her home-made blanket and thrown it into the tool shed. She did not want to look at it anymore.

Also at night she refused to kneel before her bed to pray. A deep anger against God was burning in her soul. She knew she was being sinful, but why had God taken her brother, and now her baby? Why should she pray? God would be wondering at night why He did not hear from her anymore. God was so powerful, that He would surely notice right away that one of His children did not want to talk to Him anymore. Then God would know how hurt she was.

For a few nights it made her feel better to have her revenge. But then she began to feel strangely unhappy. God's spirit also works in the hearts of His younger children, and in His love He gently calls them back to the fold when they go astray.

In Rita's case He used some of His faithful and happy ambassadors.

On December 24, the Van Dyk's went to bed rather late. Mother had been up for a few hours and they had sung Christmas carols. Grandma had insisted on singing a solo with her quavering voice, and she had attempted to stand up on a chair. "Sometimes she thinks she's a little girl again," mother had whispered, "just let her be." Rita and Henk had difficulty suppressing their giggles, but it had been a good night together. They had been served real chocolate milk with cookies and the candles had burned all night. Tomorrow relatives would probably come to visit after church, and Rita and Henk, with their dad, would go to the Sunday school program in the afternoon, and probably get a few candies and an orange. Maybe even a book. Life was good again!

Rita briefly hesitated before stepping into bed, but then she stubbornly decided she still wasn't going to pray. She knew she was listening to Satan, but she was not ready to repent.

Soon she fell asleep. Hours later she woke up with a start. "Glory to God, Glory to God in the highest," sang a choir, accompanied by trumpets. The sound came from outside, rather under her bedroom window. But it was the middle of the night, and pitchdark! Shivers ran down Rita's spine. Maybe Jesus was returning with the sound of the trumpets! Maybe this was an angel choir!

She gathered enough courage to tiptoe to the window and open the curtains. And then she saw them! In a circle they stood, holding a few lanterns, members of the Salvation Army! "Silent Night, Holy Night," they continued their singing, and Rita listened as if she were in a trance.

When the song was finished she noticed that her hands were folded and that she was crying. The demon of anger in her heart had fled and the Prince of Peace had entered. If God had sent His Son to earth as a little baby, all because of love, also for her, then why should she be angry at God for taking her two brothers to heaven? Slowly the choir moved on, feet shuffling on the pavement, voices subdued, until they disappeared around a corner.

Downstairs Rita heard voices, and Dad came upstairs to see if his children were awake. "They do this every year, and visit as many elderly and sick people during the Christmas night as they can, to bring some cheer," he explained. "I guess they must have heard that Mom is still quite weak. Last year they could not go out, because the war was still on and we had an eight p.m. curfew. Isn't it beautiful that they started again?"

When everything was quiet again, Rita snuggled under the blankets. God was in His heaven, and all was well. No, not quite. Quickly she jumped out of bed again and knelt down. Were the angels rejoicing?

Bertha Hosmar has published several children's stories. She lives in Whitby, Ontario.

Attention: All regular C.C. subscribers

We sincerely hope you will enjoy reading our 1986 Christmas issue, which was mailed from our office in St. Catharines in the usual manner. Here's hoping that Canada Post will see to it that everyone of you gets his/her copy in time for Christmas!

This issue has been made available free of charge to many of the Reformed churches throughout Canada. So it is quite possible that you (or your family) will receive more than one copy of this issue.

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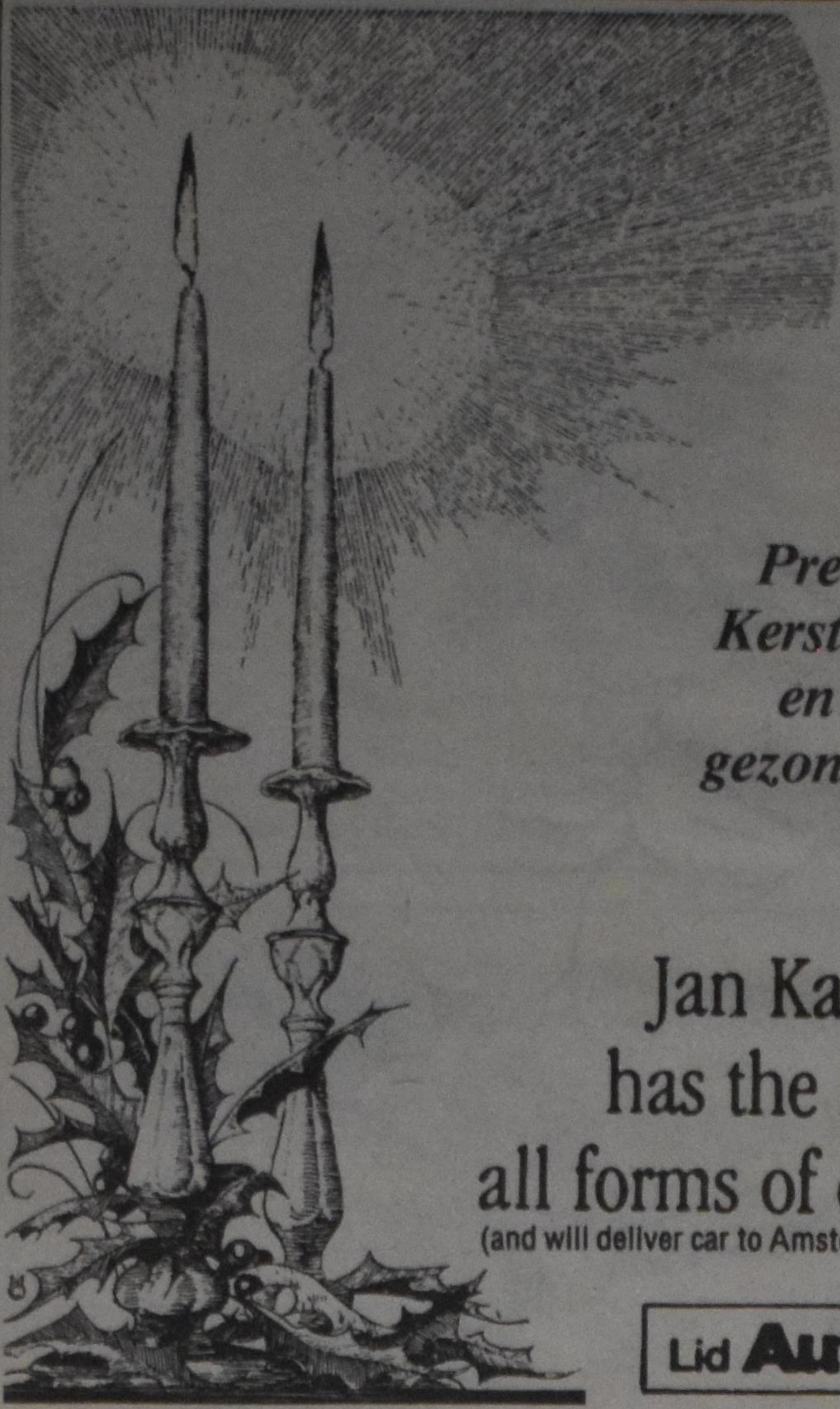
Stan de Jong
Manager



Prettige Kerstdagen en een gezond 1987

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Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
(416) 336-2920
Ask for Ingrid

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6,7)

The staff of Speelman's Bookhouse
(Rexdale, Ontario)
wishes all its customers
a blessed Christmas
and a prosperous
New Year.

John & Grace Speelman

Hollandia Cookies

We, the staff and distributors of Hollandia Bakeries Ltd. wish to thank our many friends for their loyalty and support during the past year. We extend our very best wishes for a blessed Christmas and a prosperous 1987.

Bakers of Hollandia and Archway Cookies
P.O. Box 100, Mount Brydges, ON N0L 1W0

Christmas is a contextualized thing
like an onion that makes you cry
weepy splashes for the Child born
in a stable.

You there with your wall to wall
thick stringy carpet tender to the feet
and don't forget the creamy snow sweet drifting
idyllic like while the hearth is glowing
and icicles hanging.

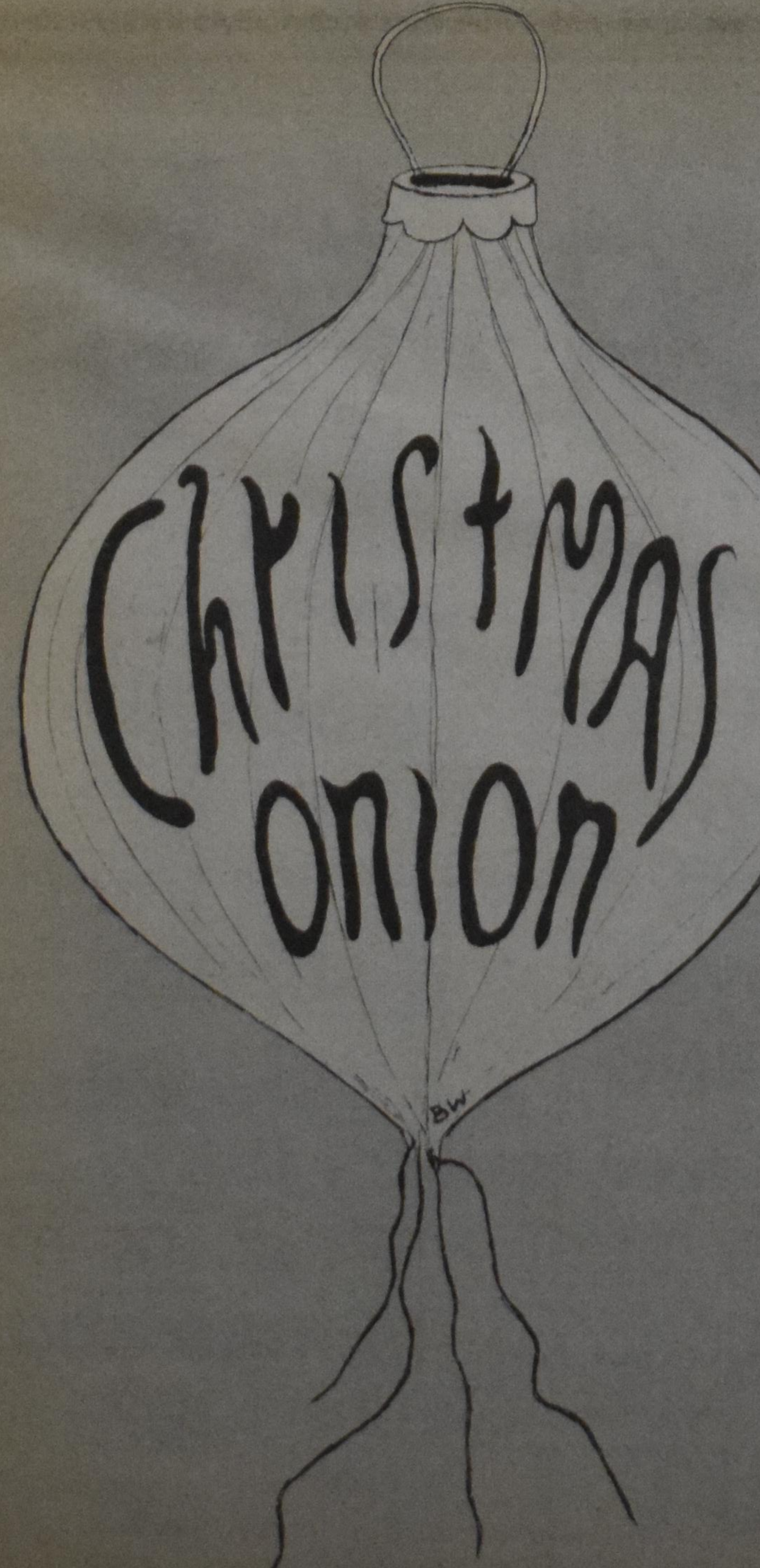
But peel away the santa sleighs
and dreamy music ting-a-linging
and peel away the lathery layers of presents
under the green pine
brightfully delightfully stacked
and longing

(but not really green, the pine, but
winking blinking gaudy lights)
and peel peel peel away
the drinks and parties: missing the mistletoe
what's left?

of Christmas?

Got you there.

No commercial mirth nor easy answer
if the computer hasn't been programmed
to cultural shock and peeled away decontextualized
barren births and unstable
peeks into the barn.



See, there was this shack
or cave
or something we call

the poor place where Christ came.

Peel it down another onion ring.
Do you see this shack you might mistake
for a stall (smell and all)
but it is really a little mission church?

No snow. No presents. No santas.
Only los santos, the saints of Jesus
brothers and sisters of the Lord
poor to the bone.

No jobs, no health care, no turkey
but praising the coming of our Lord
into a stable just like their
shack church.

All of them in this holy shanty
singing like angels and their kids
the smallest of them often naked
— no swaddling clothes.

Peel down a few rings of this onion
and cry for the joy of the real sting
because what's left at the centre of it all
is Christ.

Shout for a shanty Christmas!
Where no one gobbles turkey
and to be born on the dirt floor
is just the way it happens
and to be poor is to be like the Lord
did it:
and when the rings are peeled away
in spite of it all or through it all
or under it all somehow
what remains of Christmas
is Christ.

Peel away the layers of lay-away
planned Christmases stocked with stuff
and stuffing in the onion of it all
and let us cry long
tears

because peeling an onion sometimes ends in
nothing
at the
centre.

No easy answer?

But at the centre is this shanty
and there in the food trough
lies Jesus
wrapped
in

banana leaves
in the campo
of Honduras.

Frank Sawyer
Honduras

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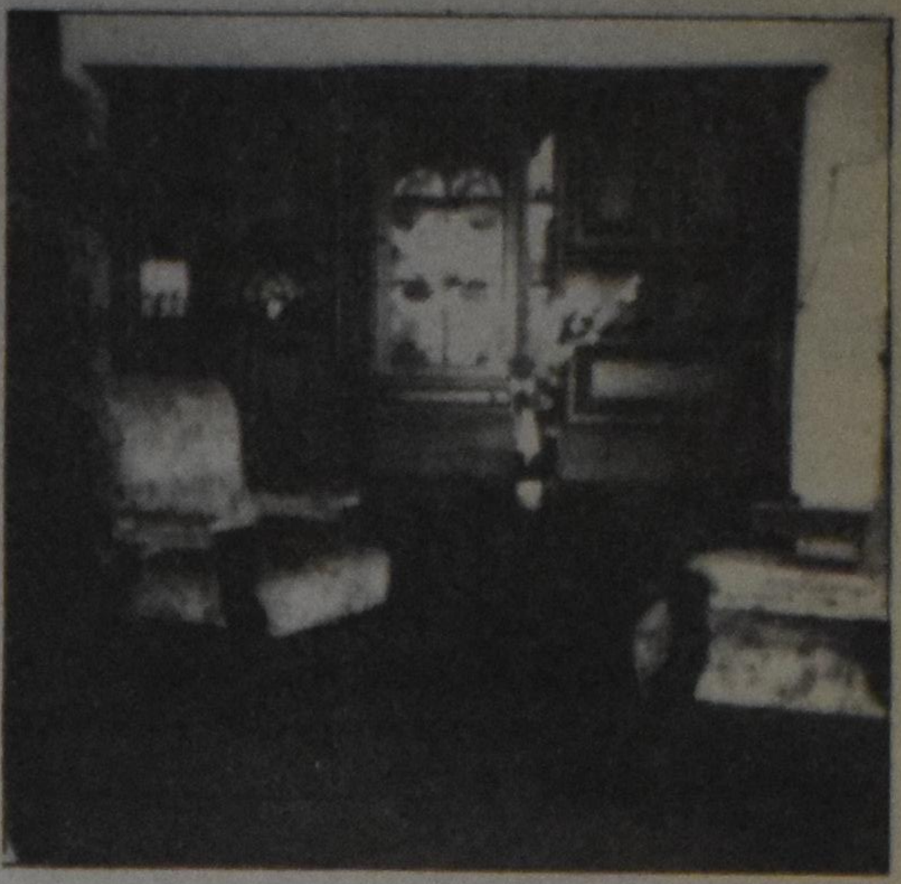

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Madendorf's Deli	Bradford, Ontario
Variation Store	New Market, Ontario
I.G.A. Store	Alliston, Ontario
Alex Grocery	Springdale, Ontario
Mrs. J. Haak 376-2486	Owen Sound, Ontario
WESTERN ONTARIO:	
Mike's Meat Market	London, Ontario
DeWaal Imports	London, Ontario
Palmer's Red & White	Shedden, Ontario
The Dutch Store	Clinton, Ontario
Stratford Packers Delicatessen	Stratford, Ontario
Hesselink's	Drayton, Ontario
The Low Land Deli	Woodstock, Ontario
Koopman's Dutch Imports	Ingersoll, Ontario
The Dutch Grocer	Aylmer, Ontario
Van Ryn's Gift Shop	St. Thomas, Ontario
Norwich Delicatessen	Norwich, Ontario
Mike's Delicatessen	Woodstock, Ontario
Schinkle's Meat Mkt.	Chatham, Ontario
Dutch Shop	Sarnia, Ontario
Pop Shop	Sarnia, Ontario
Kitchener Waterloo Dutch Shop	Kitchener, Ontario
CENTRAL ONTARIO	
Simon De Groot Meat & Deli	Toronto, Ontario
Holland Store	Toronto, Ontario
Rembrant Deli	Willowdale, Ontario
Niemeyer's Deli	Richmond Hill, Ontario
Edit Deli	Richmond Hill, Ontario
Stouville Deli	Stouville, Ontario
Klein-Horsman Delicatessen	Scarborough, Ontario
Dick's Food	Brampton, Ontario
Dutch Toko	Guelph, Ontario
Taste of Europe	Guelph, Ontario
Holland Shop	Acton, Ontario
Jeanette Deli	Georgetown, Ontario
Moike Min-A-Mart (Holland Christian Homes)	Brampton, Ontario
The Dutch Mill	Mississauga, Ontario
Old Country Deli	Oakville, Ontario
Dutch Store	Milton, Ontario
Ed's Deli	Burlington, Ontario
Dutch Shop	Burlington, Ontario
Dutch Toko	Hamilton, Ontario
The Dutch Shop	Brantford, Ontario
European Deli	Cambridge, Ontario
H de Koning Butcher	Port Dover, Ontario
Wilsonville General Store	Wilsonville, Ontario
Brown Barrel Deli & Gifts	Sheffield, Ontario
Link's Deli	Dundas, Ontario
Touch of Europe	Dundas, Ontario
Ancaster Deli & Gifts	Ancaster, Ontario
Werger	Dunnville, Ontario
Delca	Stoney Creek, Ontario
Dutch Shop	Grimsby, Ontario
IGA	Smithville, Ontario
IGA	Beamsville, Ontario
IGA	Vineland, Ontario
IGA	Cayuga, Ontario
IGA	Hagersville, Ontario
Foodland	Smithville, Ontario
Westside Deli	Port Colborne, Ontario
Hogeterp Meat	Cayuga, Ontario
Andy's Meat	Cayuga, Ontario
John Deli	Welland, Ontario
Fenwick	Fenwick, Ontario
Ridderkhoff	Fenwick, Ontario
Ramakers Dutch Imports Inc.	St. Catharines, Ontario
Stamford Delicatessen	St. Catharines, Ontario
Stamford Delicatessen	Niagara Falls, Ontario
M.B. Foods Ltd.	Virgil, Ontario
EASTERN ONTARIO	
East End Meat	Whitby, Ontario
South Mill	Whitby, Ontario
Whitby Bakery	Whitby, Ontario
Teeninga's Deli	Oshawa, Ontario
Dykstra's Deli	Bowmanville, Ontario
Cobourg Meat Market	Cobourg, Ontario
Brighton Deli	Brighton, Ontario
Keene General Store	Keene, Ontario
Heidi's Deli	Kingston, Ontario
Golden Rooster Deli	Kingston, Ontario
Trenton Spec Deli	Trenton, Ontario
Quinty Deli	Trenton, Ontario
Downtown Deli	Belleville, Ontario
Dutch Groceries Importers	Ottawa, Ontario
Holland Shop	Manotick, Ontario
Wooden Shoe	Renfrew, Ontario
Boers Delicatessen	Brockville, Ontario
NOVA SCOTIA	
Bunsmaster	Sydney, Nova Scotia
Co-op	St. Peter's, Nova Scotia
Dutch Canadian Shop	New Minas, Nova Scotia
Ryan's I.G.A.	Truro, Nova Scotia
NEW BRUNSWICK	
Holland Food Imports	Fredericton, New Brunswick
P.E.I.	
Tony's Deli	Charlottetown, P.E.I.
MANITOBA	
Dutch Meat Market	Winnipeg, Manitoba
Bake Oven	Winnipeg, Manitoba
ALBERTA	
Dutch Cash & Carry	Calgary, Alberta
Elmwood Meats	Edmonton, Alberta
Wooden Shoe	Lethbridge, Alberta
Dutch Import	Rocky Mountain House, Alberta
BRITISH COLUMBIA	
Dieter's Deli	Richmond Vancouver, B.C.
Hollandia Deli	Tsawwassen, B.C.
Peter's Deli	White Rock, B.C.
Carls Meat	Abbotsford, B.C.
Maple Ridge Butcher	Maple Ridge, B.C.
Supervalu	New Westminster, B.C.

Classifieds

1986 Christmas Greetings

BOONSTRA: Aan al onze familie en vrienden bidden en wensen wij een gezegende Kerst en Nieuwjaar toe. Dat ook 1987 een jaar des Heren moge zijn.
Mr. and Mrs. Joh. & Grietje Boonstra, Round Lake Rd., R.R.#1, Telkwa, B.C. V0J 2X0

BRUINSMA: We wish all our relatives, friends and neighbours a blessed Christmas and a happy 1987.
Thys and Alice, 1214 Neptune Dr., Ruskin, FL 33570

DE JONG: Wij wensen familie en vrienden gezellige Kerstdagen en een gezegend Nieuwjaar toe.
Mr. and Mrs. Kornelis De Jong, R.R.#1, Morrisburg, ON K0C 7X0

DE JONG: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."
Best wishes to all our friends and relatives for a joyful Christmas and a peace-filled New Year.
Stan and Corrie de Jong, 2 Sullivan Dr., St. Catharines, ON L2N 1K2

DE RIJK: To all my friends and everyone reading C.C., a blessed Christmas and God's blessing and nearness during the New Year!
Mrs. An de Rijk, 134 Sanders St., #215, Box 1134, Exeter, ON N0M 1S0

ELLENS: Gordon and Hillie wish their relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year.
1466 Exmouth, Sarnia, ON N7S 3X9

GERRITSEN: Door dezen wensen we U allen des Heren zegen, merry Christmas en een happy New Year.
Mrs. H. Gerritsen, Shalom Manor, Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5

GUETTER: We wensen al onze familie en vrienden een rijk gezegend Kerstfeest, en Nieuwjaar toe. Hartelijk gegroet.
Jan and Nel Guetter, R.R.#5, G.M.B. 901, Clinton, ON N0M 1L0

HIEMSTRA: Marten and Alice Hiemstra, 12 Veterans Ave., Bowmanville, wish children, grandchildren, great-grandchild, relatives, friends and neighbours God's blessing at Christmas and in the New Year.

HOUTMAN: The Houtmans, Harry, Tine, Heather, Ruth and Neil, wish their many relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and a joyous 1987.
45 Harriet St., Toronto M4L 2G1

HOUTMAN: Harry Houtman wishes his many business and work friends and acquaintances throughout Canada a blessed celebration of Christ's birth and a joyous New Year.

KERSTEN: We wish all our relatives and friends God's blessing at Christmastime and in the New Year.
Mr. and Mrs. T. Kersten, 83 Kent St., Apt. 405, Woodstock, ON N4S 8S4

KOOPS: Wij wensen al onze familie, vrienden en bekenden een gezegend Kerstfeest en des Heeren zegen voor het Nieuwe jaar.
Jan and Maria Koops-Lamberts, 73 Earlscourt Cresc., Woodstock, ON N4S 5H2

LISE: Although seriously ill this past summer, God looked after us and spared Tom's life. We wish all our relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year and good health.
Jane and Tom Lise, Box 245, Drayton, N0G 1P0

MELENBERG: Blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year to all our friends and relatives.
Gerrit and Anne Melenberg, 10406-144 St., Edmonton, AB T5N 2V4

MULDER: "Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day." (1 Chron. 16:23)
As we celebrate again the good news of His salvation we wish our family and friends a very blessed Christmas. May the joy of His coming remain with you from day to day throughout 1987.
Mr. and Mrs. Harry and Wilma Mulder, 7900 McLaughlin Rd., Apt. H306, Brampton, ON L6V 3N2

TIGCHELAAR: A blessed Christmas and New Year to all our relatives and friends in Canada and the U.S.A.
Anna and Klaas Tigchelaar, Shalom Manor, #418, Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5

VAN HERK: Bill and Audrey are wishing their children and friends a blessed Christmas and the Lord's guidance for 1987.

VANDERVEEN: Wij winskje al us freonen en femylje de seine fan 'e Heare foar it Krystfeest en foar 1987.
Knilles and Albertje VanderVeen, Holland Christian Homes, Brampton, Ont.

VEENSTRA: Bij het vieren van het Kerstfeest en de wisseling van het jaar, wensen wij familie, vrienden en bekenden Gods zegen.
Pieter and Florence Veenstra, 53 Ghent St., St. Catharines, ON L2N 2L8

WITVOET: Christmas 1986
To friend and foe,
No mistletoe
No ho-ho-ho
No quid pro quo
Just — "Domino."
Bert and Alice Witvoet, St. Catharines, Ont.

WITVOET: "God sent His Son; they called Him Jesus.
He came to love, heal and forgive ...
Because I know He holds the future
And life is worth the living
Just because He lives."
This hymn is my testimony to all my relatives and friends at Christmastime.
Mrs. G. Witvoet, #302, 40 Mohawk Rd., E., Hamilton, ON L9A 2G7

YUNGBLUT: The families at Greenview Farms (W.V. Yungblut and sons) wish all their friends and associates a most blessed Christmas and the peace of our Lord for every coming new year.
Fonthill, Ont.

Births

VANDERDEEN: With praise and thanksgiving to God, for the gift of life, Clarence and Irene are happy to announce the birth of our son, JEFFERY IVAN. He was born on November 12, 1986, and weighed 8 lbs. 3 oz. Jeffery is a brother for Beth and a grandson for Mr. and Mrs. Ipe VanderDeen of Strathroy, and Mr. and Mrs. Tom Sikma of Norwich. He is another great-grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. R. Feddema of Strathroy, and Mr. T.C. Strikwerda of Bowmanville.
Address: R.R.#5, Strathroy, ON N7G 3H6

Marriages

COLYN-PRANGE: With joy and thanks to the Lord, we, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Colyn, of Wellandport, Ont., and Mr. and Mrs. J. Prange, of Sarnia, Ont., are pleased to announce the forthcoming marriage of our children, ANITA and RON. The ceremony will take place, D.V., on Friday, January 2, 1987 at 6:00 p.m., in the Redeemer Chr. Ref. Church, Sarnia, Ont. Rev. J. Suk officiating.
Future address: 671½ Brigden Side Rd., Sarnia, ON N7T 7H3

VAN NOORD-KAMPHUIS: Mr. and Mrs. Case Van Noord and Mr. and Mrs. John Kamphuis are pleased to announce the forthcoming marriage of their children RUTH ANN and LAMBERT ANTHONY. The Lord willing, the ceremony will take place on Saturday, December 20, 1986, at 3:00 p.m., in the Ingersoll Chr. Ref. Church. Rev. J.W. Van Weelden and John Gerrits officiating.
Future address: 47 Robinson Rd., Grimsby, ON L3M 3C7

Anniversaries

1961 December 23 1986
We are happy to announce the 25th wedding anniversary of our parents,

PETER and ALIE GEUS
(nee Schenk)

We pray that the Lord will continue to strengthen and guide them in the years to come.
With love from your children:
Fred
Sylvia
Hilda
Open house on December 26, at home address: 34 Charles Rd., Orillia, ON L3V 3H4

1961 December 2 1986

DICK and NELLIE ROMP
(nee Triemstra)

With praise and thankfulness to God, we wish to announce the 25th wedding anniversary of our parents. We thank the Lord for giving us such a wonderful Christian home and we pray that He will continue to bless them both in their life together.
With love from their children:
Henry & Michele Romp — Orangeville
Don & Lisa VanBodegom — Orangeville
Frank — at home
Christa — at home
Address: 48 Chisholm St., Orangeville, ON L9W 1R4

Anniversaries

Burlington, Ontario
1961 December 9 1986
Thankful to the Lord, we hope to celebrate on Tuesday, December 9, 1986, D.V., the 25th wedding anniversary of our dear parents,

PETER and EBBY VAN DYK
(nee Vander Velde)

We thank God for sparing them for each other and us during these years and pray He will continue to be their strength in the years that lie ahead. "We'll give Him all the glory."
Much love from your three sons:
Pete Jr.
David
Stephen
We invite you to join us in celebrations at an open house to be held in the Trinity Chr. School gym, 650 Walker's Line, Burlington, Ont., on Tuesday, December 9, 1986, from 7:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
Best wishes only, please!
Home address: 2039 Mountain Grove Ave., Burlington, ON L7P 2H8

Obituaries

On Monday, November 17, 1986, the Lord took home our dear friend,

BERT HOFSTEDE

May the Lord comfort and sustain his wife Jenny and their children and grandchildren.
"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8)
Mrs. Z. ten Klooster
Mr. & Mrs. D. van Stralen
Mrs. P. Looienga
Mr. and Mrs. S. Vlietstra
Mr. & Mrs. D. Nap
Mrs. M. Huisman

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o'ershadowed,
Sweetly my soul shall rest."
On Monday, November 17, 1986, after a lengthy illness, and at the Lord's time, He took home to be with Him, His child, our beloved husband, father and grandfather,

EGBERT HOFSTEDE

April 26, 1914 — November 17, 1986
Beloved husband of Jenny Hofstede.
Dear father and grandfather of:
Harry & Trudy Hofstede;
Ed & Kerri
Terry & Karen
Sharon
Joe & Anne Hofstede
Teresa & Ed
Janice
Janet & Grant Cousins
Kathy
Karen
Stephen
Sid & Karen Hofstede;
Chris
Sarah
Irene & Adrian Weening
Lindsey
Jamie
Becky
"Hij is verlost, God heeft hem welgedaan." (Psalm 116)
Holland Christian Homes, H315, 7900 McLaughlin Rd. S., Brampton, ON L6V 3N2

The consistory and congregation of the Ebenezer Chr. Ref. Church extend their Christian sympathy to Nellie Smit and family in the death of their husband and father,

SIKKE SMIT

who served our congregation as a deacon. May God's grace comfort and sustain her and her family in this time of sorrow.

Classifieds continued on next page.

Obituaries

Hardenberg, Netherlands — Thamesville, Ontario
August 1929 — October 1986
On Sunday, October 26, 1986, the Lord took home our beloved husband, stepson, father, stepfather, grandfather and stepgrandfather,

DON COUNSELL

He taught us all so much: to live each day at a time to the Lord, and how much more important it is to give than to receive.
"If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:8)
Beloved husband of:
Grace Counsell (Smids) — Thamesville, Ont.
Dear stepson of:
Margaret Fernhout and Hilda Smids.
Dear father and grandfather of:
Jackie & Mike Johnston; Jennifer, Karen — Port Lambton, Ont.
Dear stepfather and stepgrandfather of:
Fred & Anita Smids; Johnny, Jasper, Cheryl, Steven, Nathan — Thamesville, Ont.
Marg & Harold Vanderende; Bradley, Jeremy — Blenheim, Ont.
Clarence — Brampton, Ont.
Hilda — Chatham, Ont.
Stanley — at home
"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:56,57)

Personal

Christian bachelor desires meeting and establishing a relationship with a sincere Christian woman in her thirties; someone who enjoys the outdoors and lives in Southern Ontario. Send replies to: Calvinist Contact, File #2446, 99 Niagara St., St. Catharines, ON L2R 4L3

For sale

Organ - Gilbransen
Two full keyboards, full pedal. $5,000. Call Mississauga, Ont.; (416) 848-2861.

Organ for sale
Yamaha Electone — two keyboards, base pedals, rhythm box, fun block. Excellent condition. Phone: (416) 864-7843, St. Catharines.

For rent

Four bedroom house for rent; available January 1, 1986. Large private lot, built-in stove and oven, close to church and Christian school. Must have good references. Call Dunnville: (416) 774-5004.

Semi-detached home, Bradenton, Florida. One bedroom, full bathroom, air-conditioning, automatic washer, colour TV. U.S. $175 per week. For information phone (813) 756-7923 or write: J. Schriel, 2403 Florida Blvd., Bradenton, FL 33507.

Get 75 mpg large car, R.V.'s etc. Build and instal a new convey gas vapour carb. Fit any car, truck or R.V. For info. send self-addressed stamped envelope to: Thrift Carb 10731 King. Geo. Hwy. Surrey, B.C. V3T 2X6

Classifieds

Help Wanted

For our retail garden centre: **An experienced store clerk,** knowledge of nursery stock helpful but not essential. For our landscaping department; **an assistant to our landscaper,** some experience preferred.
Contact Cor Vanderkruk
John Connon Nurseries Ltd.
Box 200, Waterdown, ON L0R 2H0
Phone: (416) 689-4631

Help Wanted

Licensed **mechanic** for bustling auto repair shop in central Ontario city. Write Calvinist Contact, file #2447, 99 Niagara St., St. Catharines, ON L2R 4L3

Babysitter/housekeeper wanted — light housekeeping and caring for six-month-old child, two to three days a week in Burlington, Ont. Phone: (416) 522-5000.

The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools
invites applications for the position of

Secondary Education Co-ordinator

Successful applicants will have significant experience in teaching and curriculum development and should be familiar with educational theory and administration.

Send application, resume and references to:
Mr. A. Guldemond
Executive Director
Ontario Alliance of Christian School Societies
P.O. Box 7220, Ancaster, ON L9G 3L4
(416) 648-2100
Deadline for submission: December 15, 1986

Holland Christian Homes
invites applications for
Full-time and Part-time R.N.'s, R.N.A.'s and H.C.A.'s
for Faith Manor Nursing Home
(residential and extended care)

Qualifications:
— Must have or nearly have registration or certificate
— Must have special interest and Christian concern when caring for the elderly
— Command of Dutch and English languages a definite asset

If you wish to work in the most unique seniors complex offering the ultimate in Christian care, please send resume to:

Director of Care
7900 McLaughlin Road, S.
Brampton, ON L6V 3N2
Phone: 499-3333

The Ontario Christian School Teachers' Association (OCSTA)
invites applications for the position of

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In co-operation with the OCSTA Board of Directors the Executive Director will:
— manage the daily business needs of the 650 association members
— develop and supervise professional growth opportunities for the OCSTA membership
— initiate discussions and provide opportunities for planning and implementing matters relevant to the future direction of the Christian school movement in Ontario and other provinces served by OCSTA
— serve as liaison for the OCSTA membership to CSI, the OACSS, the OCSAA, the Ministry of Education and related organizations.

The applicant should be a professional educator certified and qualified to teach in and/or administer Christian schools in Ontario. Preferential consideration will be given to applicants with advanced degrees and/or a demonstrated ability to be involved in Christian education in Ontario. The position is full-time commencing August 1, 1987. Salary and benefits commensurate with education and experience. Applications will be accepted until February 2, 1987.
Direct your application or inquiries to:
"Search Committee, OCSTA"
c/o Hank Hultink
547 West Fifth St., Hamilton, ON L9C 3P7
Phone: 1-416-388-2645

Help Wanted

Help Wanted

Position Open

The office supervisor is now accepting applications for a full-time **secretarial position** that is becoming vacant. This position involves working closely with the academic administration and the advancement and recruiting departments. College or university degree preferred. Please submit your application and resume to:
Lorraine Elisen by December 19, 1986
Redeemer College
Ancaster, ON L9G 3N6
(416) 648-2131

Shalom Manor
Home for the Aged Incorporated
has a position available for an
Ontario-licensed RN
This is a permanent, part-time position, approximately two shifts per week.
Applicants should be able to speak Dutch and English and give Christian leadership and direction.
Closing date: December 8, 1986.
Send resumes to:
H. John Kamphuis, Administrator
12 Bartlett Ave., Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5
Phone: (416) 945-9631

The Toronto (Rexdale) head office of the Christian Labour Association of Canada needs

one full-time and one part-time secretary
as of January 1987.
Applicants should be competent in all areas of office work. Experience in computers and/or wordprocessors is desirable. Attractive wages and benefits available.

Send application and resume to:
Ed Vanderkloet, Executive Secretary
821 Albion Rd., Rexdale, ON M9V 1A3

Teachers

TRURO, N.S.: Central Nova Chr. School invites applications for a **teaching principal** for the 1987-88 school year. 50 student school, CSI and OACS affiliated, interdenominational, multi-grade classrooms, K-9. Send inquiries to Education Committee, Central Nova Christian School, P.O. Box 1486, Truro, N.S. B2N 5V2

PEMBROKE: Teacher/Administrator. Starting date: Prefer January '87. Responsibilities include: Teaching grades 5-8 full-time, 1-4 part-time, and administrative duties between teaching. Qualifications: A degree in education. Experience is not essential, but is an asset. The individual should be organized and have administrative abilities. Apply: Send resume to Pembroke Christian School, c/o Education Committee, Box 563, Pembroke, ON Canada K8A 6X7. Starting rate: $22,500.

LEDUC, Alberta: Covenant Chr. School, Leduc Alberta is seeking a **teacher-principal** for the 1987-1988 school year. Send resumes to: Diane Groenewold, 78 Bella Coola Dr., Leduc, AB T9E 1S1 or phone: 1-403-986-8192.

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Teachers

BELLEVILLE: Quinte Chr. High School requires a **music teacher** to commence duties on January 26, 1987. Send letter of application and resume to: Principal, Quinte Christian High School, 289 Pinnacle St., Belleville, ON K8N 3B3

DUNCAN, B.C.: Duncan Christian School invites applications for **grades 2/3** teaching position for January 1987. Please send letter of application and resume to Mr. W. Van Deventer, Duncan Chr. School, P.O. Box 549, Duncan, B.C. V9L 3X9 or phone: (604) 746-5341.

STRATFORD: Stratford and District Christian School invites applications for a full-time **grades 4/5/6** teaching position starting January 5, 1987. Preference may be given to an applicant who has majored in French. Please send letter of application and resume to: Mr. A. Bron, Principal, R.R.#1, Sebringville, ON N0K 1X0 or phone: (519) 393-5675.

Teachers

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See page 12 for details.

Any **student** from **Classis Chatham** who is studying for **full-time ministry** in the **CRC** and is in need of **financial assistance** for the coming academic year is asked to contact the Student Fund Committee, c/o Nick Overduin, Secretary, 182 Centre St., St. Thomas, ON N5R 3A4, in order to receive application forms which must be returned to Nick Overduin by **March 6, 1987.** Late applications **will not be processed.**

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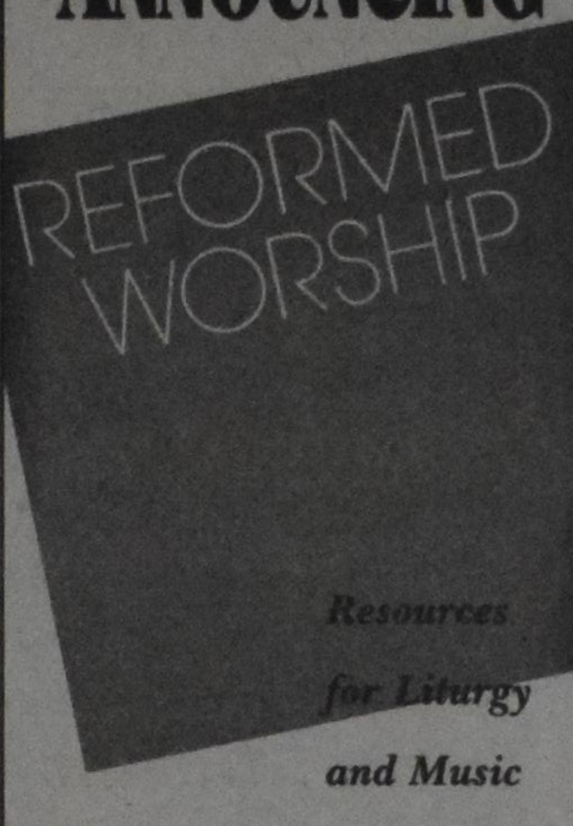

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Calendar of Events

Dec. 6 "The Ambassadors" lead Dutch carol sing-a-long in First CRC, **Hamilton,** Ont., at 8 p.m.

Dec. 7 Christmas Concert presented by David Davis, organist and choir master of Hamilton's Christ Church Cathedral, at 8 p.m. in Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby,** Ont. Favoured music of the season. Opportunity to sing along!

Dec. 7 Handel's "Messiah" will be performed by "The Laudate Dominum Choir" (organist Dick DeJonge), at 8 p.m. in St. Andrew's United Church, **Chatham,** Ont. Everyone welcome. Free will offering.

Dec. 10 Prayer Vigil for Life from 12:01 a.m. to 12:00 midnight outside the Morgentaler Abortuary at 85 Harbord St., **Toronto,** Ont. For info. contact Campaign Life at (416) 368-8479.

Dec. 12&13 J.S. Bach's "Christmas Oratorio" will be performed by the Listowel Concert Singers and the K/W Symphony Orchestra, conductor Paul Sloan at 8 p.m. both days in the Trinity United Church, **Listowel,** Ont. For info. and tickets call: (519) 291-3106.

Dec. 13 Christmas Concert by the "Mountainview Singers" at 8 p.m., in the Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby,** Ont. Audience participation. Welcome to all!

Dec. 13 Choir and organ concert (Christmas) at 8:00 p.m. in St. Thomas Anglican Church, Ontario St., **St. Catharines,** Ont. By the Choirs and Brass under the direction of Leendert Kooij, with Andre Knevel at the organ.

Dec. 14 Christmas Concert by the St. Thomas District Male Choir "Crescendo," St. Thomas Ladies' Choir "Gloria in Excelsis," and the Bel Canto Christian Choral Society, in the Bethel Chr. Ref. Church, **London,** Ont., at 8 p.m.

Dec. 17 Christmas concert at 8:00 p.m. in Trinity United Church, Church and Division Streets, **Bowmanville,** Ont. By the Choirs and Band under the direction of Leendert Kooij, with Andre Knevel at the organ.

Dec. 19 Christmas Concert by Adoramus-Maranatha Choirs, directed by John Hunse, at 8 p.m. in Mount Hamilton CRC, **Hamilton,** Ont.

Dec. 20 "The Ambassadors" in candlelight service, at 8 p.m. in First CRC, **Hamilton,** Ont.

Dec. 20 Christmas concert at 8:00 p.m. in the Willowdale United Church, Kenneth Ave. in **Willowdale** (Toronto). By the Choirs and Band under the direction of Leendert Kooij, with Andre Knevel at the organ.

Dec. 21 Christmas Concert by Adoramus-Maranatha Choirs, directed by John Hunse, at 7:25 in the CRC of **York,** Ont.

Dec. 21 Christmas Concert by the Bel Canto Christian Choral Society, the St. Thomas Ladies' Choir "Gloria in Excelsis" and the St. Thomas District Male Choir "Crescendo" in the First United Church, St. George St., **St. Thomas,** Ont., at 8 p.m.

Dec. 21 Organ recital "Christmas at Twilight" presented by Henri H. Vanderkooi, together with pianist Ashton McMaster and soloist Jean Parrott. At 4 p.m. in United Church, Brown and South Sts., **Port Hope,** Ont.

Dec. 28 Christmas Celebration at 8 p.m. in Covenant CRC, **St. Catharines,** Ont. The "Collegium Musicum Male Chorus" directed by Gerzinus E. Hoekstra will perform Christmas spirituals and a cantata by Lubeck. A brass septet and organ will assist in audience singing of Dutch and English Christmas carols. Refreshments after.

Dec. 28 Organist Christ Teeuwsen and "The Ambassadors" in seasonal concert at Knox Presb. Church, **St. Catharines,** Ont., at 8 p.m.

Feb. 11-25 Lecture series presented by The King's College on Feb. 11, 18 and 25 on the theme "Women in Society," at 8 p.m. in the Chr. school, **Lacombe,** Alta. Speakers: Drs. Greidanus, Groenewold and Leslie-Ann Hales.

Advertising Deadlines

Dated	Mailed	Display advertising	Classified deadline
Fri.Dec.12	Tues.Dec.9	Wed.Dec.3-8:30a.m.	Thurs.Dec.4-8:30a.m.
Fri.Dec.19	Tues.Dec.16	Wed.Dec.10-8:30a.m.	Thurs.Dec.11-8:30a.m.
Fri.Jan2	Tues.Dec.23	Wed.Dec.17-8:30a.m.	Thurs.Dec.18-8:30a.m.

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Voor meer inlichtingen

Let op het ingevoegde schrijven dat u met uw kinderbijslag voor november heeft ontvangen, of neem contact op met uw dichtstbijzijnde belastingkantoor. (Nummer en adres kunt u in de blauwe pagina's van uw telefoonboek vinden).

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Marriage and Marital Therapy
Dr. Stan Skarsten will examine from a Christian perspective some cultural assumptions about marriage and marital therapy and will critically examine current major approaches to marital therapy and the role and mandate of the therapist.
Wednesday evenings, 7 to 10 p.m., January 14 through April 15

This winter ICS is also offering a three-week interim course on **Marxism, the Arts, and Society** to be taught by ICS graduate and current Calvin College professor Dr. Lambert Zuidervaart, January 6 through 28 during the daytime. The class will explore whether the practice of an art form is neutral and examine the factors shaping artistic practice.

Admission
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Fee
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For more information call the ICS Admissions Department at (416) 979-2331 or write us at 229 College St., Toronto, ON M5T 1R4.

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ICS

De droom van Hogarth

John Martens

Christiaan Hogarth was nachtwaker op een grote fabriek. Zoals men weet dient de bewaking van industriële ondernemingen dag en nacht door te gaan. Verdachte individuen zijn niet gewenst op fabrieksterreinen. Dit jaar was het Christiaan's beurt om in de laatste nacht voor Kerstmis dienst te doen.

Het was een rustige nacht geweest, want de meeste mensen zijn thuis bij hun gezin in deze heiligste der nachten.

Vroeg in de morgen werd Christiaan afgelost en vermoeid maar opgewekt en blij ging hij huiswaarts. Er lag een dik pak sneeuw op de nog verlaten straten en hij vorderde slechts langzaam. Met een zucht van verlichting sloot hij eindelijk, thuis gekomen, de deur achter zich dicht en ging in zijn gemakkelijke stoel zitten voor het brede raam in de voorkamer van zijn gezellige, geriefelijke woning.

Daarbuiten dwarrelden de sneeuwvlokken onhoorbaar en zachtjes naar beneden en op de takken van de bomen en de daken vormde zich een steeds dikker wordende mantel van sneeuw. Slechts af en toe reed voorzichtig een auto voorbij. Christiaan nam de krant van gisteren ter hand. De poes lag opgerold aan zijn voeten en het spinnen van het tevreden huisdier was het enige geluid dat men hoorde. Het was stil in de huiskamer, erg stil. Christiaan schrok bijna van het geritsel van de krant wanneer hij een pagina omkeerde, en zelfs de kat keek dan met één oog dicht op naar zijn baas.

De krant stond vol advertenties. Dancings, cabarets, kroegen en wat dies meer zij, prezen in gezwollen, overdreven taal de geneugten aan, die binnen hun muren zouden zijn te vinden. Christiaan las in de krant ook over de voorbereidingen die in het verre Bethlehem waren getroffen in verband met de plechtigheden op kerstdag in de Kerk van de Geboorte, gebouwd over de stal of grot waar Jezus werd geboren.

De krant sprak ook van spanningen in het Heilige land en in Bethlehem, de geboorteplaats van de Vredevorst. En verder was er nog een fotografische opname van een voorstelling van "De Geboorte in Bethlehem," met Jozef en Maria en de herders en in het midden het kindje Jezus. Christiaan had meegeholpen het op te bouwen op het grasveld voor de hoog op een heuvel gelegen kerk waar hij 's zondags samen met zijn vrouw zelden en onder het gehoor ontbrak. Het was een smaakvolle en treffende weergave van de gebeurtenissen in Bethlehem's stal, zoals men daarvan kan lezen in de evangelieën. De koeien en ezels op de achtergrond keken verbaasd over de schouders van Jozef en Maria naar het kind in de ruwhouten voerbak met de versleten randen.

Het ezeltje op wiens rug Maria de lange reis naar Bethlehem had gemaakt, stond niet ver van de kribbe en deed zich tegoed aan het geurige hooi. Het dier was hongerig na de lange tocht helemaal van Nazareth en telkens spitste het de oren wanneer kindergeluidjes uit de schamele wieg klonken. Met grote belangstelling bekeek Chris de foto. Het was werkelijk een interessante krant en wat was het toch rustig en vreedzaam in de kamer. Vrede, vrede, op aarde ... de gedachte aan het kerstfeest maakte hem diep gelukkig.

Een enkele auto reed voorbij en maakte diepe sporen in de sneeuw, voor het met flikkerend achterlicht om de hoek van de straat verdween. Maar wat naderde daar nu van de andere kant?

Stomverbaasd zag hij een ezeltje komen aanstappen. Het liep midden op straat en zette telkens zijn poten voorzichtig neer, zonder evenwel te aarzelen, alsof het dier zijn eindbestemming naderde. Het was een grijze ezel en zijn glimmende hoeven zakten diep weg in het sneeuwtapijt. Tussen zijn lange oren, die naar voren gericht waren, lag als een mutsje wat witte sneeuw.

Op de rug van de ezel reed een vrouw in een lange donkere mantel. Ze zat iets voorovergebogen en haar hoofd was gewikkeld in een lange sjaal, die ook haar gezicht gedeeltelijk bedekte; slechts een enkele haarlok ontsnapte van onder de hoofddoek en viel over haar voorhoofd en in die ene lok glinsterden de sneeuwvlokken als zovele miniatuur-kronen. Een forse jongeman met een zwarte baard marcheerde naast de ezel; zijn gehandschoende vuist omklemde een stevige herderstaf. Voorzichtig leidde hij het dier voorbij de diepste sneeuw-ophopingen. Langzaam kwam het vreemde gezelschap naderbij en niemand scheen hun aanwezigheid in de straat op te merken. En dat was geen wonder, want de mensen sliepen nog in hun verwarmde slaapkamers en onder hun electrische dekens.

Als aan de grond genageld keek Chris toe hoe de man met de staf het ezeltje rechtstreeks naar het brede vensterraam van zijn huis leidde. Op slechts enkele passen van het raam bleef de ezel staan. Hij lichtte met een zekere trots zijn kop en keek naar Chris. Wat de laatste vooral trof, was de uitdrukking op het gelaat van de vrouw toen ook zij hem even aankeek. Ze wierp een blik op hem waarin teerheid, zachtheid en een zweem van blij verwachten verenigd lagen. Het was alsof ze Chris vertelde dat er iets ontzagwekkends, iets groots stond te gebeuren, heel spoedig. Ze had de sneeuw uit haar haar en uit de plooien van haar mantel geschud. De man stampte met de staf in de sneeuw en toen tikte hij heel zachtjes ermee tegen het glas van het dubbele raam en wees in de verte. Chris kon zijn woorden wel niet verstaan, maar was er zeker van dat de lippen van de gebaarde man de woorden "naar Bethlehem" hadden gevormd.

Toen, op een teken van zijn begeleider, maakte de ezel rechtsomkeert en vervolgde zonder falen met vaste stap zijn weg door de besneeuwde straten.

Chris Hogarth zag het gezelschap verdwijnen om de hoek van de straat en daar had de leider met zijn staf naar boven gewezen, terwijl de vrouw met de donkere mantel nog een ogenblik had omgekeken en met haar smalle hand een simpel afscheidsgebaar had gemaakt. De ezel was zelfbewust en kranig de hoek omgestapt. Iedereen kon wel zien dat hij trots was op zijn rol. Hogarth sprong op van zijn stoel toen het drietal verdwenen was achter het struikgewas op de hoek. Hij wilde het vreemde trio volgen; waar gingen ze toch heen?

Hij was snel wakker geworden toen de krant met luid geritsel uit zijn handen viel, terwijl de kat geschrokken van zijn schoot sprong. Chris was er echter zo zeker van, dat wat hij had gezien werkelijkheid was, dat hij naar buiten snelde om te ontdekken waar de vroege reizigers zich heen spoedden.

Maar in de sneeuw kon hij slechts de sporen vinden van de ezel en de voetstappen van een volwassen man. Ze leidden van het raam naar de straat en door de verse sneeuw naar de hoek van de straat, waar ze plotseling ophielden. Verder was er geen spoor meer te vinden van mens noch dier, en vrede en rust heersten in de straat. Uit de verte kwamen de klanken van vroege kerstklokken.

Christiaan Hogarth had geglimlacht. De hele dag zag hij voor zijn geestesoog de beelden van zijn droom. Hij was echter diep getroffen door de

Vervolg op pagina 34 ...

De droom van Hogarth

... vervolg van pagina 33.

levendigheid van de bijzonderheden van het gedroomde, en kon niet dan met de grootste moeite de gedachte van zich afzetten, dat het gebeurde werkelijkheid was geweest.

Enige uren later, na een korte slaap, nu zonder dromen, wandelde Chris met zijn vrouw naar de kerk, waar op deze morgen de geboorte van Jezus vreugdevol en dankbaar werd verkondigd. Het was een fraaie morgen. De winterzon scheen aan een wolkenloze oneindige blauwe hemel, terwijl het uitspansel zich welfde boven de stad met haar verscheidenheid van veelkleurige woningen, die zulk een diep contrast vormden met het sneeuwdek op de straten en plantsoenen. De kerk stond bovenop de heuvel, en hoe hoger ze klommen, des te wijder werd het uitzicht, totdat de hele stad aan hun linkerhand aan hun voeten lag in een pracht van kleuren, het zuiver wit van de sneeuw, het donker groen van de sierdennen, besprenkeld met poedersneeuw en de pasteltinten van de huizen. Aan hun rechterkant trokken de koolmeesjes met Christiaan en zijn vrouw mee naar boven en volgden hen op de voet van boom tot boom.

Zo trokken ze voort op hun weg naar de kerk, terwijl in de verte op de golvende heuvels, die reikten tot de verre einder waar de dichte dennenbossen, waar herten en een enkele wolf zich ophielden, zich uitstrekten tot in het verre verschiet. En boven al dit schoon prijkte de zon, die nu reeds bijna zijn zenith had bereikt op deze korte winterdag, zoals dat door de Schepper van hemel en aarde was bepaald. En was het niet alsof de hemelen en de natuur rondom hen tezamen met de mensheid op deze morgen zongen van vreugde over de geboorte van het kind Jezus in Bethlehem?

Chris moest weer denken aan zijn droom, waarin een ezel zo triomfantelijk en vol zelfbewustzijn was opgetreden, ten volle verzekerd van zijn eervolle rol als het uitverkoren vervoermiddel van de heilige familie. Hij herinnerde zich, hoe zelfverzekerd de ezel naar hem had gekeken en hoe behoedzaam en voorzichtig zijn stap was geweest, toen hij Maria en het alsnog ongeboren kindje Jezus op zijn rug had gedragen. Hoewel Chris niets had kunnen verstaan door het dubbele raam, toen in de morgen Maria en Jozef voor zijn venster stonden, was hij er zeker van, dat het ezeltje ook zou hebben gezongen, als het bij machte was geweest zulks te doen. Maar iedereen weet dat ezels niet kunnen zingen. Ze kunnen alleen maar onwelluidende klanken voortbrengen. Men noemt dat balken en dat moet het dier dan ongetwijfeld hebben gedaan voor het raam van Chris Hogarth's huis. En de Almachtige moet met welgevallen hebben geluisterd. Want zo is de ezel uit God's hand voortgekomen en slechts zo kan hij zijn Maker prijzen.

Het werd een onvergetelijke kerstdag voor Christiaan en zijn vrouw. Want niets is meer uitzichtgevend voor de mens dan dat de Schepper bij zijn schepsel wil wonen.

Pasen volgde Kerstmis en de zomer kwam in zicht. Dan bezocht Chris Hogarth met zijn vrouw dikwijls de dierentuin, want ze hielden beiden veel van hun viervoetige en gevederde medeschepselen. Maar na zijn droom op de vroege kerstdag beschouwde Chris een ezel niet louter als een grappig beest met koddige oren en een onmuzikale stem. Zijn respect voor het dier was toegenomen, want meer dan eens had het een belangrijke rol gespeeld in Jezus' leven.

Allereerst op de weg naar Bethlehem, en later nog toen de menigte Jezus in Jerusalem had verwelkomd met luide Hosannas, ter gelegenheid van de intocht van de Here, gezeten op een ezel, in de stad Davids. Hogarth toefde steeds wat langer bij de langorige schepsels, langer dan bij de andere attracties van de dierentuin. Hij was steeds weer getroffen door hun gelijkenis met de ezel van zijn droom op een kerstmorgen toen het sneeuwde.

In hun ogen meende Chris een geheim te lezen maar ook een zekere trots, en in hun balken hoorde hij een uitbundige lofkreet gewijd aan de Schepper van al wat leeft, die het niet beneden zich achtte, onder de mensen te komen wonen en het welzijn van Jezus en zijn moeder Maria toe te vertrouwen aan een nederig, vaak bespot ezeltje.

John Martens woont in Listowel, Ontario.

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De nieuwe psalter hymnal heeft 18 kerstliederen

John Van Harmelen

In de Christian Reformed Church of North America werd op de Synode van 1986 het besluit genomen om het werk van het Psalter Hymnal Revision Committee goed te keuren. Veel werk was verzet, en op een nauwkeurige wijze is het comite te werk gegaan.

De acte van de synode 1968 vermeldt dan ook in een aantekening: Om haar dankbaarheid aan de Psalter Hymnal Revision Committee te tonen gaf de synode de leden van deze commissie, terwijl alle synode-leden opstonden, een algemene toejuiching voor hun gewaardeerde arbeid.

Als u een copie van de Psalter Hymnal (een werk-copie) openslaat dan ziet u dat er verschillende rubrieken zijn. De eredienst, het kerkelijk jaar, algemene gezangen en bijbelse liederen. En die rubrieken zijn dan weer onderverdeeld.

In verband met het naderende kerstfeest was voor mij het kerkelijk jaar belangrijk. Die rubriek heeft zeven onderafdelingen: Advent, Kerstfeest, Driekoningen, Lijdenstijd, Pasen, Hemelvaart en Koningschap, Pinksteren en de Heilige Geest.

Elke onderafdeling heeft een eigen nummer. Kerstfeest is b.v. nr 9, en als u dan verder bladert ziet u dat er in de nieuwe hymnal 18 gezangen voorkomen die betrekking hebben op het Kerstfeest. Driekoningen is nr 10, en bevat 14 gezangen, enz.

De hymn: "Komt, verwondert u hier, mensen" is van nr 9 het 11e nr (9-11 dus). Een ander gezang, waarvan ik ook studie gemaakt heb en dat heet "Hoor de Herders, hoe ze Hem loven', kon onze Psalter blijkbaar niet halen. U kunt het wel vinden in het Liedboek voor de Kerken, nr 137.

Dat kerkboek heeft echter niet minder dan 25 kerstliederen.

De nieuwe Psalter Hymnal heeft verscheidene gezangen verplaatst van de gezangen (hymns) naar de bijbelse liederen. Als bij het verschijnen alle liederen hun juiste plaats hebben gevonden, geloof ik dat het een overzichtelijke Psalter Hymnal zal zijn.

Komt verwondert u

Velen onder ons kennen het kerstlied "Komt verwondert u hier mensen." Dit gezang kunt u ook vertaald terugvinden in de nieuwe Psalter Hymnal. Het deed mij goed twee vertrouwde Nederlandse namen te lezen bij dit lied. Ds. Klaas Hart las mij enkele jaren geleden de Engelse vertaling voor. We spraken toen ook over een Engelse vertaling van het lied: "Ik leg de namen van Uw kinderen in Uw Handen." Bert Witvoet had ook zijn deel in 't tot stand komen van deze Engelse vertaling. [Mijn aandeel is alleen maar de laatste zes regels van het derde vers. B.W.]

Hier volgt dan de oorspronkelijke text met de vertaling in het Engels.

John Van Harmelen is emeritus predikant. Met zijn vrouw woont hij 's zomers in Caesarea, Ontario, en 's winters in Palmetto, Florida.

Komt, verwondert u hier, mensen

De Coussemakers Chants Populaires des Flamands de France 1856
Zetting Adriaan Engels

1. Komt, verwondert u hier, mensen,
ziet, hoe dat u God bemint,
ziet vervuld der zielen wensen,
ziet, dit nieuwgeboren kind!
Ziet, die 't woord is, zonder spreken,
ziet, die vorst is, zonder pracht,
ziet, die 't al is, in gebreken,
ziet, die 't licht is, in de nacht,
ziet die 't goed is, dat zo zoet is,
wordt verstoten, wordt veracht.

2. Ziet, hoe dat men met Hem handelt,
hoe men Hem in doeken bindt,
die met zijne godheid wandelt
op de vleugels van de wind.
Ziet, hoe ligt Hij hier in lijden
zonder teken van verstand,
die de hemel moet verblijden,
die de kroon der wijsheid spant.
Ziet, hoe tere is de Here,
die 't al draagt in zijne hand.

3. O Heer Jesu, God en mense,
die aanvaard hebt deze staat,
geef mij wat ik door U wense,
geef mij door Uw kindsheid raad.
Sterk mij door Uw tere handen,
maak mij door Uw kleinheid groot,
maak mij vrij door Uwe banden,
maak mij rijk door Uwe nood,
maak mij blijde door Uw lijden,
maak mij levend door Uw dood!

Oud-Nederlands

Come and stand amazed

1. Come and stand amazed, you people,
see how God is reconciled!
See His plans of love accomplished,
see His gift, this new-born child!
See the Mighty, weak and tender
see the Word who now is mute!
See the Sovereign without splendor,
see the Fullness destitute!
The Beloved whom we covet
in a stall of low repute!

2. See how Mary loves her Christ-child
wraps Him up in swaddling bands.
He, the host of heaven transcending,
has the whole world in His hands.
See Him lying in a manger,
heaven's counsel, wisdom's well;
in this world an unknown stranger,
God with us, Immanuel!
See how tender our defender
here with us has come to dwell.

3. O Lord Jesus-God, yet lowly
who assumed this poverty
let all my desire be holy
for you came to set me free.
With your tender looks inspiring
let your weakness give me drive;
let your bondage give me freedom,
let your need enrich my life;
let your hardship make me joyful,
let your death end all my strife!

Text: Dutch medieval.
Translation Klaas Hart, 1906-1973, and Bert Witvoet, 1983, alt.
Tune: Old Dutch hymn — named: Verwondert.
't Is één van de nieuwe hymns in de nieuwe Psalter Hymnal van de Chr. Ref. Church.

Een herder op het water

Het is haast niet te geloven maar het is wel waar. Op veel Nederlandse schepen kom je maar weinig belijdend geloven tegen. Men steekt er maar een beetje de gek mee. Men is doodsbang om voor een religieuze fanatiekeling uitgemaakt te worden. Men houdt zich op de vlakte.

Daarom is het kerstfeest weer een unieke gelegenheid om de juiste snaar aan te raken en zo te proberen de mensen toch van hun stuk (de vlakte) te krijgen zodat ze "de hoogte" en "diepte" van God's liefde en vergeving gaan ervaren.

Bid met ons voor de *Rio Tejan* die met een lading explosieven over de oceaan zwabbert, dat het schip veilig aankomt en bovenal dat de bemanning mag ontdekken dat die veiligheid komt van Hem die gezegd heeft: Ik ben de goede Herder.

Stel u voor: Een Herder op het water.

Stel u voor: Een goede Herder.

Stel u voor: DE BESTE HERDER op het land EN het water.

Op Kerstdag zal de Kapitein onze Kerstboodschap voorlezen aan de bemanning van de Rio Tejan in de buurt van Indonesia. Lees maar mee:

m.v. Rio Tejan
Mijne heren:

Laten we deftig beginnen. Allemaal gefeliciteerd. Met de geboorte van Jezus Christus.

Ik heb bij die inderhaast in elkaar getimmerde kerstdoos 7 exemplaren van "Het Levend Evangelie" gestopt. Voor ieder één. Kijk nou even naar dat verhaal in Lukas twee en daar staat dat *wij* een kind hebben gekregen.

Nu geef ik toe dat de meesten van ons daar niet op zijn ingespeeld.

Als je dat verhaal van de komst van Jezus leest in Lukas 2, dan ontdek je dat de mensen die in die tijd leefden dat Jezus op deze wereld kwam, ook niet stonden te trappelen van ongeduld. Volgens het verhaal was de boel niet klaar, was er geen mens op voorbereid, keek geen mens er naar uit.

Het was toch eigenlijk maar een beetje een armetierige zaak met een stel herders en een paar engelen. Er was geen ruimte in de herberg. Er was geen ruimte in het hart van de mensen. Armetierig!

Niet omdat de Almachtige zo armetierig is. Denk nou heus niet dat Hij geen raad wist met volle hotels daar in dat gat Bethlehem. Wel nee. Hij had met gemak kunnen zeggen: "Jongens, de bovenste 10 verdiepingen van de Hilton heb Ik nodig voor de geboorte van Jezus." Hij had kunnen zeggen tegen die koning Herodus: "Hoepel op, want ik heb het Paleis nodig om de wereld de komst van De Grote Koning te laten zien."

Maar de Almachtige deed dat niet om de eenvoudige reden dat Hij zijn entree in deze wereld en bij de mensen nooit en te nimmer forceert.

Dus nu ook niet. Hij biedt zichzelf wel aan. Nog steeds. Hij blijft bij z'n woord dat een mens echt tot ontplooing komt als hij met Jezus Christus in een levend contact komt.

Nou even over die pakjes

Klaar gemaakt door een stel mensen uit de London Ontario Christian Reformed Church. Ik ben er van overtuigd dat geen van u een fles after-shave of een paar sokken zo ontiegelijk nodig heeft dat hij zegt: "Mensen, wat zijn we blij met dat pakje, want ik loop zonder sokken."

Maar het gaat om het idee. Die mensen kennen u niet. En het zit er dik in dat u ze nooit tegen zult komen. Toch nemen ze ergens de moeite om deze zaak in te pakken en om aan de zeelieden te denken met de kerst. Daar moet onze pet voor af. Als er meer mensen waren op deze wereld die aan andere mensen dachten, zat het er beter voor met de wereld.

Nog wat. Die mensen bidden ook voor de zeelieden, speciaal met de kerst. Een beetje bidden voor elkaar (een beetje voorbede) kan echt geen kwaad. Dit zijn dus bepaald positieve punten in de kerk. Ergens heeft dat toch wel te maken met die Jezus die in z'n hele leven tot uitdrukking bracht dat het niet om onszelf maar om de ander gaat in de wereld.

Nog wat anders. Waar u zit met de kerst weet geen mens. God weet het en u weet het nu ook. Maar we hebben wel voor u gebeden in onze Zondags-diensten in het zeemanshuis, dat die hele explosieve toestand zwaar onder controle zou blijven en dat onder alle omstandigheden u toch de behoudende en beschermende hand van die Jezus van het kerstfeest zou ervaren. En nu, vandaag op kerst bidden we weer voor u, bij naam, voor een behouden vaart, voor een behouden thuiskomst en voor iets van de vrede van het kerstgebeuren in uw hart.

Gezegend Kerstfeest.

Ds. H. Uittenbosch

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